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POEMS,

BY

WILLIAM MASON, M. A.

CONTAINING

MONODY ON THE DEATH OF MR. POPE.
ODES.
ELEGIES.
DRAMATIC POEMS:
ELFRIDA,
CARACTACUS.
LETTERS, *&c.*

LONDON:

PRINTED BY C. WHITTINGHAM,
Dean Street;

FOR M. JONES, 1, PATERNOSTER-ROW

1802.

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TO

ROBERT, EARL OF HOLDERNESSE,

BARON D'ARCY, MENIL AND CONYERS,

LORD WARDEN OF HIS MAJESTY'S CINQUE PORTS, AND GOVERNOR OF DOVER CASTLE.

SONNET.

D'ARCY, to thee, whate'er of happier vein,
Smit with the love of song, my youth essay'd,
This verse devotes from ASTON'S secret shade,
Where letter'd ease, thy gift, endears the scene.
Here, as the light-wing'd moments glide serene,
I weave the bower, around the tufted mead
In careless flow the simple pathway lead,
And strew with many a rose the shaven green.
So, to deceive my solitary days,
With rural toils ingenuous arts I blend,
Secure from envy, negligent of praise,
Yet not unknown to fame, if D'ARCY lend
His wonted smile to dignify my lays,
The Muse's patron, but the Poet's friend.

W. MASON.

May 12, 1763.

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*MUSÆUS.

A MONODY.

Sorrowing I catch the reed, and call the muse;
If yet a muse on Britain's plain abide,
Since rapt Musæus tun'd his parting strain:
With him they liv'd, with him perchance they dy'd.
For who e'er since their virgin charms espy'd,
Or on the banks of Thames, or met their train,
Where Isis sparkles to the sunny ray?
Or have they deign'd to play,
Where Camus winds along his broider'd vale,
Feeding each blue bell pale, and daisie pied,
That fling their fragrance round his rushy side?
Yet ah! ye are not dead, celestial Maids;
Immortal as ye are, ye may not die:
Nor is it meet ye fly these pensive glades,
E'er round his laureat hearse ye heave the sigh.
Stay then awhile, O stay, ye fleeting fair;
Revisit yet, nor hallow'd Hippocrene,
Nor Thespiæ's grove; till with harmonious teen

* Mr. Pope died in the year 1744; this Poem was then written, and published first in the year 1747.

Ye sooth his shade, and slowly-dittied air.
Such tribute pour'd, again ye may repair
To what lov'd haunt ye whilom did elect;
Whether Lycæus, or that mountain fair
Trim Mænalus, with piny verdure deck'd.
But now it boots ye not in these to stray,
Or yet Cyllene's hoary shade to choose,
Or where mild Ladon's welling waters play.
Forego each vain excuse,
And haste to Thames's shores; for Thames shall join
Our sad society, and passing mourn,
The tears fast-trickling o'er his silver urn.
And, when the Poet's widow'd grot he laves,
His reed-crown'd locks shall shake, his head shall bow,
His tide no more in eddies blithe shall rove,
But creep soft by with long-drawn murmurs slow.
For oft the mighty Master rous'd his waves
With martial notes, or lull'd with strain of love:
He must not now in brisk meanders flow
Gamesome, and kiss the sadly-silent shore,
Without the loan of some poetic woe.
Say first, Sicilian Muse,
For, with thy sisters, thou didst weeping stand
In silent circle at the solemn scene,
When Death approach'd, and wav'd his ebon wand,
Say how each laurel droopt its with'ring green;
How, in yon grot, each silver trickling spring
Wander'd the shelly channels all among;
While as the coral roof did softly ring
Responsive to their sweetly-doleful song.

Meanwhile all pale th' expiring Poet laid,
And sunk his awful head,
While vocal shadows pleasing dreams prolong;
For so, his sick'ning spirits to release,
They pour'd the balm of visionary peace.
First, sent from Cam's fair banks, like Palmer old,
Came * Tityrus slow, with head all silver'd o'er,
And in his hand an oaken crook he bore,
And thus in antique guise short talk did hold.
" Grete clerk of Fame' is house, whose excellence
" Maie wele befitt thilk place of eminence,
" Mickle of wele betide thy houres last,
" For mich gode wirkè to me don and past.
" For syn the days whereas my lyre ben strongen,
" And deftly many a mery laie I songen,
" Old Time, which alle things don malliciously
" Gnawen with rusty tooth continually,
" Gnastrid my lines, that they all cancrid ben,
" Till at the last thou smoothen 'hem hast again;
" Sithence full semely glideu my rymes rude,
" As, (if fitteth thilk similitude)
" Whanne shallow brooke yrenneth hobling on,
" Ovir rough stones it makith full rough song;
" But, them stones removen, thin lite rivere
" Stealith forth by, making plesaunt murmere:
" So my sely rymes, whoso may them note,
" Thou makist everichone to ren right sote;
" And in thy verse entunist so fetisely,
" That men sayen I make trewe melody;

* *Came Tityrus,* &c.] *i. e.* Chaucer, a name frequently given him by Spenser. See *Shep. Cal.* Ecl. 2, 6, 12, and elsewhere.

" And speaken every dele to myne honoure.
" Mich wele, grete clerk, betide thy parting houre!"

He ceas'd his homely rhyme.
When * Colin Clout, Eliza's shepherd swain,
The blithest lad that ever pip'd on plain,
Came with his reed soft-warbling on the way,
And thrice he bow'd his head with motion mild,
And thus his gliding numbers gan essay.

" †Ah! luckless swain, alas! how art thou lorn,
" Who once, like me, could'st frame thy pipe to play
" Shepherds devise, and chear the ling'ring morn:
" Ne bush, ne breere, but learnt thy roundelay.
" Ah plight too sore such worth to equal right!
" Ah worth too high to meet such piteous plight!

" But I nought strive, poor Colin, to compare
" My Hobbin's or my Thenot's rustic skill
" To thy deft swains, whose dapper ditties rare
" Surpass ought else of quaintest shepherd's quill.

* *Colin Clout.*] *i. e.* Spenser, which name he gives himself throughout his works.

† The two first stanzas of this speech, as they relate to Pastoral, are written in the measure which Spenser uses in the first eclogue of the *Shepherd's Calendar;* the rest, where he speaks of Fable, are in the stanza of the *Faery Queen.*

" Ev'n Roman Tityrus, that peerless wight,
" Mote yield to thee for dainties of delight.'

" Eke when in Fable's flow'ry paths you stray'd,
" Masking in cunning feints truth's splendent face;
" Ne Sylph, ne Sylphid, but due tendance paid,
" To shield Belinda's lock from felon base,
" But all mote nought avail such harm to chace.
" Then Una fair 'gan droop her princely mien,
" Eke Florimel, and all my faery race:
" Belinda far surpast my beauties sheen,
" Belinda, subject meet for such soft lay I ween.

" Like as in village troop of birdlings trim,
" Where Chanticleer his red crest high doth hold,
" And quaking Ducks, that wont in lake to swim,
" And Turkeys proud, and Pigeons nothing bold;
" If chance the Peacock doth his plumes unfold,
" Eftsoons their meaner beauties all decaying,
" He glist'neth purple, and he glist'neth gold,
" Now with bright green, now blue himself arraying.
" Such is thy beauty bright, all other beauties swaying.

" But why do I descant this topish rhyme,
" And fancies light in simple guise pourtray?
" Listing to chear thee at this ruefull time,
" While as black Death doth on thy heart-
strings prey.
" Yet rede aright, and if this friendly lay
" Thou nathless judgest all too slight and vain,
" Let my well-meaning mend my ill essay:
" So may I greet thee with a nobler strain,
" When soon we meet for aye, in yon star-
" sprinkled plain."

Last came a bard of more majestic tread,
And *Thyrsis hight by Driad, Fawn, or Swain,
Whene'er he mingled with the shepherd train;
But seldom that; for higher thoughts he fed;
For him full oft the heav'nly Muses led
To clear Euphrates, and the secret mount,
To Araby, and Eden, fragrant climes,
All which the sacred bard would oft recount:
And thus in strain, unus'd in sylvan shade,
To sad Mussus rightful homage paid.

" Thrice hail, thou heav'n-taught Warbler!
last and best
" Of all the train! Poet, in whom conjoin'd
" All that to ear, or heart, or head, could yield

* *Thyrsis hight.*] *i. e.* Milton. *Lycidas* and the *Epitaphium Damonis* are the only Pastorals we have of Milton's; in the latter of which, where he laments *Car. Deodatus* under the name of *Damon*, he calls himself *Thyrsis*.

" Rapture, harmonious, manly, clear, sublime.
" Accept this gratulation: may it cheer
" Thy sinking soul; nor these corporeal ills
" Ought daunt thee, or appal. Know, in high heav'n
" Fame blooms eternal o'er that spirit divine,
" Who builds immortal verse. There thy bold Muse,
" Which while on earth could breath Mæonian fire,
" Shall soar seraphic heights; while to her voice
" Ten thousand Hierarchies of Angels harp
" Symphonious, and with dulcet harmonies
" Usher the song rejoicing. I mean while,
" To sooth thee in these irksome hours of pain,
" Approach thy visitant, with mortal praise
" To praise thee mortal. First, for Rhyme subdued;
" Rhyme, erst the minstrel of primæval Night,
" And Chaos, Anarch old: She near their throne
" Oft taught the rattling elements to chime
" With tenfold din; till late to earth upborn
" On strident plume, what time fair Poesie
" Emerg'd from Gothic cloud, and faintly shot
" Rekindling gleams of lustre. Her the fiend
" Oppress; forcing to utter uncouth dirge,
" Runic, or Leonine; and with dire chains
" Fetter'd her scarce-fledg'd pinion. I such bonds
" Aim'd to destroy, hopeless that Art could ease
" Their thraldom, and to liberal use convert.

" This wonder to achieve Musæus came;
" Thou cam'st, and at thy magic touch the chains
" Off dropt, and (passing strange!) soft-wreathed bands
" Of flow'rs their place supply'd: which will the Muse
" Might wear for choice, not force; obstruction none,
" But lov'liest ornament. Wond'rous this, yet here
" The wonder rests not; various argument
" Remains for me, uncertain, where to cull
" The leading grace, where countless graces charm.
" Various this peaceful cave; this mineral roof;
" This 'semblage meet of coral, ore, and shell;
" These pointed crystals thro' the shadowy clefts
" Bright glist'ring; all these slowly-dripping rills,
" That tinkling wander o'er the pebbled floor:
" Yet not this various peaceful cave, with this
" Its mineral roof; nor this assemblage meet
" Of coral, ore, and shell; nor mid the shade
" These pointed crystals, glist'ring fair; nor rills,
" That wander tinkling o'er the pebbled floor;
" Deal charms more various to each raptur'd sense,
" Than thy mellifluous lay ——"
" Cease, friendly swain;
(Musæus cry'd, and rais'd his aching head)

" ALL PRAISE IS FOREIGN; BUT OF TRUE DESERT;
" PLAYS ROUND THE HEAD, BUT COMES NOT TO THE HEART.
" Ah! why recall the toys of thoughtless youth?
" When flow'ry fiction held the place of truth?
" E'er sound to sense resign'd the silken rein,
" And the light lay ran musically vain.
" O! in that lay had richest fancy flow'd,
" The syrens warbled, and the graces glow'd;
" Had liveliest nature, happiest art combin'd;
" That lent each charm, and this each charm refin'd,
" Alas! how little were my proudest boast!
" The sweetest trifler of my tribe at most.
" To sway the judgment, while he sooths the ear;
" To curb mad passion in its wild career;
" To wake by sober touch the useful lyre,
" And rule, with reason's rigour, fancy's fire:
" Be this the poet's praise. And this possest,
" Take, Dulness and thy dunces! take the rest.
" Come then that honest fame; whose temp'rate ray
" Or gilds the satire, or the moral lay;
" Which dawns, tho' thou, rough DONNE! hew out the line:
" But beams, sage Horace! from each strain of thine.
" O if like these, with conscious Freedom bold,
" One Poet more his manly measures roll'd,

" Like these led forth th' indignant Muse to brave
" The venal statesman, and the titled slave;
" To strip from frontless Vice her stars and strings,
" Nor spare her basking in the smile of Kings:
" If grave, yet lively; rational, yet warm;
" Clear to convince, and eloquent to charm:
" He pour'd, for Virtue's cause, serene along
" The purest precept, in the sweetest song:
" If, for her cause, his heav'n-directed plan
" Mark'd each meander in the maze of man;
" Unmov'd by sophistry, unaw'd by name,
" No dupe to doctrines, and no fool to fame;
" Led by no system's devious glare astray,
" That meteor-like, but glitters to betray.
" Yes, if his soul to reason's rule resign'd,
" And heav'n's own views fair-op'ning on his mind,
" Caught from bright nature's flame the living ray,
" Thro' passion's cloud pour'd in resistless day;
" And taught Mankind in reas'ning Pride's despite,
" That God IS WISE, and ALL THAT IS IS RIGHT;
" If this his boast, pour here the welcome lays;
" Praise less than this is mockery of praise."

" To pour that praise be mine," fair Virtue cry'd;
And shot, all radiant, thro' an op'ning cloud.
But ah! my Muse, how will thy voice express

Th' immortal strain, harmonious, as it flow'd;
Ill suits immortal strain a doric dress:
And far too high already hast thou soar'd.
Enough for thee, that, when the lay was o'er,
The goddess clasp'd him to her throbbing breast.
But what might that avail? Blind Fate before
Had op'd her shears, to cut his vital thread?
And who may dare gainsay her stern behest?
Now thrice he wav'd the hand, thrice bow'd the head,
And sigh'd his soul to rest.
Now wept the Nymphs; witness, ye waving shades!
Witness, ye winding streams! the Nymphs did weep:
The heav'nly Goddess too with tears did steep
Her plaintive voice, that echo'd thro' the glades;
And, "cruel gods," and, "cruel stars," she cry'd:
Nor did the shepherds, thro' the woodlands wide
On that sad day, or to the pensive brook,

IMITATION.

Now wept the Nymphs, &c.]
Extinctum Nymphæ crudeli funere Daphnim
Flebant: vos coryli testes & flumina Nymphis.
Cum, complexa sui corpus miserabile nati,
Atque deos atque astra vocat crudelia Mater.
Non ulli pastos illis egere diebus
Frigida, Daphni, boves ad flumina; nulla neque amnem
Libavit quadrupes, nec graminis attigit herbam.

VIRG. Ecl. 5.

Or silent river, drive their thirsty flocks:
Nor did the wild-goat brouze the shrubb
rocks:
And Philomel her custom'd oak forsook:
And roses wan were wav'd by zephyrs weak,
As Nature's self was sick:
And ev'ry lily droop'd its silver head.
Sad sympathy! yet sure his rightful meed,
Who charm'd all nature: well might natur
mourn
Thro' all her choicest sweets Musæus dead.
Here end we, Goddess! this your shepher
sang,
All as his hands an ivy chaplet wove.
O! make it worthy of the sacred Bard;
And make it equal to the shepherd's love.
Thou too accept the strain with meet regard:
For sure, blest Shade, thou hear'st my doleft
song;
Whether with angel troops, the stars among,
From golden harp thou call'st seraphic lays;
Or, for fair Virtue's cause, now doubly dear,
Thou still art hov'ring o'er our tuneless sphere;
And mov'st some hidden spring her weal to rais

IMITATION.

Here end we, Goddess! &c.]
Hæc sat erit, Divæ, vestrum cecinisse Poetam
Dum sedet, et gracili fiscellam texit hibisco,
Pierides: vos hæc facietis maxima Gallo:
Gallo, cujus amor, *&c.*

VIRG. Ec. 10.

Thus the fond swain his doric oat essay'd,
Manhood's prime honours rising on his cheek:
Trembling he strove to court the tuneful maid
With stripling arts, and dalliance all too weak,
Unseen, unheard, beneath an hawthorn shade.
But now dun clouds the welkin 'gan to streak;
And now down-dropt the larks, and ceas'd their strain:
They ceas'd, and with them ceas'd the shepherd swain.

ODES.

ODE I.

TO MEMORY.

*MOTHER of Wisdom! thou whose sway
The throng'd ideal hosts obey;
Who bid'st their ranks, now vanish, now appea
Flame in the van, or darken in the rear;
Accept this votive verse. Thy reign
Nor place can fix, nor power restrain.
All, all is thine. For thee the ear, and eye
Rove thro' the realms of Grace and Harmony:
The Senses thee spontaneous serve,
That wake, and thrill thro' ev'ry nerve.
Else vainly soft, lov'd Philomel! would flow
The soothing sadness of thy warbled woe:
Else vainly sweet yon woodbine shade
With clouds of fragrance fill the glade;

* According to a fragment of Afranius, who makes E perience and Memory the parents of Wisdom.

Usus *me genuit, Mater peperit* Memoria,
ΣΟΦΙΑΝ *vocant me Graii, vos* Sapientiam.

This passage is preserved by Aulus Gellius, lib. xiii. cap.

Vainly, the cygnet spread her downy plume,
The vine gush nectar, and the virgin bloom.
But swift to thee, alive, and warm,
Devolves each tributary charm:
See modest Nature bring her simple stores,
Luxuriant Art exhaust her plastic powers;
While every flower in Fancy's clime,
Each gem of old heroic Time,
Cull'd by the hand of the industrious Muse,
Around thy shrine their blended beams diffuse.

Hail, Mem'ry! hail. Behold, I lead
To that high shrine the sacred Maid:
Thy daughter she, the Empress of the lyre,
The first, the fairest, of Aonia's quire.
She comes, and lo, thy realms expand!
She takes her delegated stand
Full in the midst, and o'er thy num'rous train
Displays the awful wonders of her reign.
There thron'd supreme in native state,
If Sirius flame with fainting heat,
She calls; ideal groves their shade extend,
The cool gale breathes, the silent show'rs descend.
Or, if bleak Winter, frowning round,
Disrobe the trees, and chill the ground,
She, mild Magician, waves her potent wand,
And ready Summers wake at her command.
See, visionary Suns arise,
Thro' silver clouds, and azure skies;
See, sportive Zephyrs fan the crisped streams;
Thro' shadowy brakes light glance the sparkling beams:

While, near the secret moss-grown cave,
That stands beside the crystal wave,
Sweet Echo, rising from her rocky bed,
Mimics the feather'd Chorus o'er her head.

Rise, hallow'd Milton! rise, and say,
How, at thy gloomy close of day;
How, when "deprest by Age, beset with wrongs;"
When " fall'n on evil days and evil tongues;"
When Darkness, brooding on thy sight,
Exil'd the sov'reign lamp of light;
Say, what could then one cheering hope diffuse?
What friends were thine, save Mem'ry and the Muse?
Hence the rich spoils, thy studious youth
Caught from the stores of antient Truth:
Hence all thy classic wand'rings could explore,
When Rapture led thee to the Latian shore;
Each Scene, that Tiber's bank supply'd;
Each Grace, that play'd on Arno's side;
The tepid Gales, thro' Tuscan glades that fly;
The blue Serene, that spreads Hesperia's sky;
Were still thine own: thy ample mind
Each charm receiv'd, retain'd, combin'd.
And thence " the nightly Visitant," that came
To touch thy bosom with her sacred flame,
Recall'd the long-lost beams of grace,
That whilom shot from Nature's face,
When God, in Eden, o'er her youthful breast
Spread with his own right hand Perfection's gorgeous vest.

ODE II.

* TO A WATER NYMPH.

YE green-hair'd Nymphs, whom Pan's decrees
Have giv'n to guard this solemn wood †,
To speed the shooting scions into trees,
And call the roseate blossom from the bud,
Attend. But chief, thou Naiad, wont to lead
This fluid crystal sparkling as it flows,
Whither, ah, whither art thou fled?
What shade is conscious to thy woes?
Ah, 'tis yon' Poplars' awful gloom:
Poetic eyes can pierce the scene;
Can see thy drooping head, thy withering bloom;
See grief diffus'd o'er all thy languid mien.
Well may'st thou wear misfortune's fainting air;
Well rend those flow'ry honours from thy brow;
Devolve that length of careless hair;
And give thine azure veil to flow
Loose to the wind: for, oh, thy pain
The pitying Muse can well relate:
That pitying Muse shall breathe her tend'rest strain,
To teach the echoes thy disastrous fate.

* This Ode was written in the Year 1747, and published in the first Volume of Mr. Dodsley's Miscellany. It is here revised throughout, and concluded according to the Author's original idea.

† A seat near *** finely situated, with a great command of water; but disposed in a very false taste.

'Twas where yon Beeches' crowding branches clos'd
What time the Dog-star's flames intensely burn,
In gentle indolence compos'd,
Reclin'd upon thy trickling urn,
Slumb'ring thou lay'st, all free from fears;
No friendly dream foretold thine harm;
When sudden, see, the tyrant Art appears,
To snatch the liquid treasures from thine arm.
Art, gothic Art, has seiz'd thy darling vase:
That vase which silver-slipper'd Thetis gave,
For some soft story told with grace,
Among th' associates of the wave;
When, in sequester'd coral vales,
While worlds of waters roll'd above,
The circling sea-nymphs told alternate tales
Of fabled changes, and of slighted love.
Ah! loss too justly mourn'd: for now the Fiend
Has on yon shell-wrought terras pois'd it high;
And thence he bids its streams descend,
With torturing regularity.
From step to step, with sullen sound,
The forc'd cascades indignant leap;
Now sinking fill the bason's measur'd round;
There in a dull stagnation doom'd to sleep.
Where now the vocal pebbles gurgling song?
The rill slow-dripping from its rocky spring?
What free meander winds along,
Or curls when Zephyr waves his wing?
Alas, these glories are no more:
Fortune, O give me to redeem
The ravish'd vase; O give me to restore
Its antient honours to this hapless stream.

Then, Nymph, again, with all their wonted ease,
Thy wanton waters, volatile and free,
Shall wildly warble, as they please,
Their soft, loquacious harmony.
Where Thou and Nature bid them rove,
There will I gently aid their way;
Whether to darken in the shadowy grove,
Or, in the mead, reflect the dancing ray.
For thee too, Goddess, o'er that hallow'd spot,
Where first thy fount of crystal bubbles bright,
These hands shall arch a rustic grot,
Impervious to the garish light.
I'll not demand of Ocean's pride
To bring his coral spoils from far:
Nor will I delve yon yawning mountain's side,
For latent minerals rough, or polish'd spar:
But antique roots, with ivy dark o'ergrown,
Steep'd in the bosom of thy chilly lake,
Thy touch shall turn to living stone;
And these the simple roof shall deck.
Yet grant one melancholy boon:
Grant that, at evening's sober hour,
Led by the lustre of the rising moon,
My step may frequent tread thy pebbled floor.
There, if perchance I wake the love-lorn theme,
In melting accents querulously slow,
Kind Naiad, let thy pitying stream
With wailing notes accordant flow:
So shalt thou sooth this heaving heart,
That mourns a faithful Virgin lost;
So shall thy murmurs, and my sighs impart
Some share of pensive pleasure to her ghost.

ODE III.

TO AN *ÆOLUS'S HARP.

SENT TO MISS SHEPHEARD.

Yes, magic Lyre! now all comple
Thy slender frame responsive rings
While kindred notes, with undulation sw
Resonant wake from all thy vocal strin
Go then to her, whose soft request
Shall my blest hands thy form prepa
To go, and sweetly sooth her tender bre
With many a warble wild, and artless ai
For know, full oft, while o'er the n
Bright June extends her fragrant re
The slumbering Fair shall place thee n
head,
To court the gales that cool the sultry pl
Then shall the Sylphs, and Sylphids
Mild Gemi all, to whose high care
Her virgin Charms are giv'n, in circling
Still gentle round thee in the fields of
Sound, fluttering thro' thy trembling
Shall catch the rich melodious spoil
And, gliding, brush thee with their purple
To aid the Zephyrs in their tuneful toil;

* This instrument was first invented by Kirch
the Jesuit, who has illustrated it amongst the *Curiosities* of a
Universe, &c. &c. After having been neglected
many years, it was again accidentally discovere
about

While others check each ruder gale,
Expel rough Boreas from the sky,
Nor let a breeze its heaving breath exhale,
ave such as softly pant, and panting die.
Then, as thy swelling accents rise,
Fair Fancy, waking at the sound,
ıall paint bright visions on her raptur'd eyes,
nd waft her spirits to enchanted ground;
To myrtle groves, Elysian greens,
In which some fav'rite Youth shall rove,
ıd meet, and lead her thro' the glittering scenes,
ıd all be Music, Ecstacy, and Love.

ODE IV.

TO INDEPENDENCY.

Here, on my native shore reclin'd,
While Silence rules this midnight hour,
I woo thee, Goddess. On my musing mind
Descend, propitious Power!
ıd bid these ruffling gales of grief subside:
d my calm'd soul with all thy influence shine;
ı yon chaste Orb along this ample tide
aws the long lustre of her silver line,
hile the hush'd breeze its last weak whisper blows,
ıd lulls old Humber to his deep repose.

Come to thy Vot'ry's ardent prayer,
In all thy graceful plainness drest:
No knot confines thy waving hair,
No zone thy floating vest;

Unsullied Honour decks thine open brow,
And Candour brightens in thy modest eye:
Thy blush is warm Content's ethereal glow;
Thy smile is Peace; thy step is Liberty:
Thou scatter'st blessings round with lavish hand,
As Spring with careless fragrance fills the land.

As now o'er this lone beach I stray,
* Thy fav'rite Swain oft stole along,
And artless wove his Dorian lay,
Far from the busy throng.
Thou heard'st him, Goddess, strike the tender string,
And bad'st his soul with bolder passions move:
Soon these responsive shores forgot to ring
With Beauty's praise, or plaint of slighted Love;
To loftier flights his daring genius rose,
And led the war, 'gainst thine and Freedom's foes.

Pointed with Satire's keenest steel,
The shafts of Wit he darts around;
Ev'n † mitred Dulness learns to feel,
And shrinks beneath the wound.
In awful poverty his honest Muse
Walks forth vindictive thro' a venal land:
In vain Corruption sheds her golden dews,
In vain Oppression lifts her iron hand;

* Andrew Marvel, born at Kingston upon Hull in the year 1620.

† See *The Rehearsal transprosed*, and an account of the effect of that satire, in the Biographia Britannica, *art. Marvell.*

He scorns them both, and, arm'd with truth alone,
Bids Lust and Folly tremble on the throne.

Behold, like him, immortal Maid,
The Muses' vestal fires I bring:
Here, at thy feet, the sparks I spread:
Propitious wave thy wing,
And fan them to that dazzling blaze of Song,
Which glares tremendous on the Sons of Pride.
But, hark, methinks I hear her hallow'd tongue!
In distant trills it echoes o'er the tide;
Now meets mine ear with warbles wildly free,
As swells the Lark's meridian ecstacy.

"Fond Youth! to Marvell's patriot fame,
"Thy humble breast must ne'er aspire,
"Yet nourish still the lambent flame;
"Still strike thy blameless Lyre:
"Led by the moral Muse, securely rove;
"And all the vernal sweets thy vacant youth
"Can cull from busy Fancy's fairy grove,
"O hang their foliage round the fane of Truth:
"To arts like these devote thy tuneful toil,
"And meet its fair reward in D'Arcy's smile.

"'Tis he, my Son, alone shall cheer
"Thy sickning soul; at that sad hour,
"When o'er a much-lov'd Parent's bier,
"Thy duteous sorrows shower:
"At that sad hour, when all thy hopes decline;
"When pining Care leads on her pallid train,
"And sees thee, like the weak, and widow'd Vine,
"Winding thy blasted tendrils o'er the plain.

" At that sad hour shall D'Arcy lend his aid,
" And raise with Friendship's arm thy droopii
head.

" This fragrant wreath, the Muses' meed
" That bloom'd those vocal shades among
" Where never Flatt'ry dar'd to tread,
" Or Interest's servile throng;
" Receive, thou favour'd Son, at my command
" And keep, with sacred care, for D'Arcy's brov
" Tell him, 'twas wove by my immortal hand,
" I breath'd on every flower a purer glow;
" Say, for thy sake, I send the gift divine
" To him, who calls thee HIS, yet makes thee MINI

ODE V.

TO A FRIEND.

AH! cease this kind persuasive strain,
Which, when it flows from Friendshi
tongue,
However weak, however vain,
O'erpowers beyond the Siren's song:
Leave me, my friend, indulgent go,
And let me muse upon my woe.
Why lure me from these pale retreats?
Why rob me of these pensive sweets?
Can Music's voice, can Beauty's eye,
Can Painting's glowing hand supply
A charm so suited to my mind,
As blows this hollow gust of wind,

As drops this little weeping rill
Soft tinkling down the moss-grown hill,
While thro' the west, where sinks the crimson day,
Meek Twilight slowly sails, and waves her banners grey?

Say, from Affliction's various source,
Do none but turbid waters flow?
And cannot Fancy clear their course?
For Fancy is the friend of Woe.
Say, mid that grove, in love-lorn state,
While yon poor Ringdove mourns her mate,
Is all that meets the shepherd's ear,
Inspir'd by anguish, and despair?
Ah! no; fair Fancy rules the Song:
She swells her throat; she guides her tongue;
She bids the waving Aspin spray
Quiver in cadence to her lay;
She bids the fringed Osiers bow,
And rustle round the lake below,
To suit the tenor of her gurgling sighs,
And sooth her throbbing breast with solemn sympathies.

To thee, whose young and polish'd brow
The wrinkling hand of Sorrow spares;
Whose cheeks, bestrew'd with roses, know
No channel for the tide of tears;
To thee yon Abbey dank, and lone,
Where ivy chains each mould'ring stone
That nods o'er many a Martyr's tomb,
May cast a formidable gloom.

Yet some there are, who, free from fear,
Could wander thro' the cloisters drear,
Could rove each desolated aisle,
Tho' midnight thunders shook the pile;
And dauntless view, or seem to view,
(As faintly flash the lightnings blue)
Thin shiv'ring Ghosts from yawning charnels throng,
And glance with silent sweep the shaggy vaults along.

But such terrific charms as these,
I ask not yet: My sober mind
The fainter forms of sadness please;
My sorrows are of softer kind.
Thro' this still valley let me stray,
Rapt in some strain of pensive Gray:
Whose lofty Genius bears along
The conscious dignity of Song;
And, scorning from the sacred store
To waste a note on Pride or Power,
Roves thro' the glimmering twilight gloom,
And warbles round each rustic tomb:
He, too, perchance (for well I know,
His heart can melt with friendly woe)
He, too, perchance, when these poor limbs are laid,
Will heave one tuneful sigh, and sooth my hov'ring Shade.

ODE VI.

* ON THE FATE OF TYRANNY.

I. 1.

OPPRESSION dies: the Tyrant falls:
The golden City bows her walls!
Jehovah breaks th' Avenger's rod.
The Son of Wrath, whose ruthless hand
Hurl'd Desolation o'er the land,
Has run his raging race, has clos'd the scene of blood.
Chiefs arm'd around behold their vanquish'd lord;
Nor spread the guardian shield, nor lift the loyal sword.

I. 2.

He falls; and Earth again is free.
Hark! at the call of Liberty,

* This Ode is a free paraphrase of Part of the 14th chapter of Isaiah, where the Prophet, after he has foretold the destruction of Babylon, subjoins a Song of Triumph, which, he supposes, the Jews will sing when his prediction is fulfilled. *And it shall come to pass in the day that the Lord shall give thee rest from thy sorrow, and from thy fear, and from the hard bondage wherein thou wast made to serve, that thou shalt take up this proverb against the King of Babylon, and say,* " How *hath the oppressor ceased,* &c.

1st Strophe, ver. 4, 5, 6.

1st Antistrophe, *the whole Earth is at rest,* &c. ver. 7, 8.

All Nature lifts the choral song.
The Fir-trees, on the mountain's head,
Rejoice thro' all their pomp of shade;
The lordly Cedars nod on sacred Lebanon:
Tyrant! they cry, since thy fell force is broke,
Our proud heads pierce the skies, nor fear the woodman's stroke.

I. 3.

Hell, from her gulph profound,
Rouses at thine approach; and, all around,
Her dreadful notes of preparation sound.
See, at the awful call,
Her shadowy Heroes all,
Ev'n mighty Kings, the heirs of empire wide,
Rising, with solemn state, and slow,
From their sable thrones below,
Meet, and insult thy pride.
What, dost thou join our ghostly train,
A flitting shadow light, and vain?
Where is thy pomp, thy festive throng,
Thy revel dance, and wanton song?
Proud King! Corruption fastens on thy breast;
And calls her crawling brood, and bids them share the feast.

II. 1.

O Lucifer! thou radiant star;
Son of the Morn; whose rosy car

REFERENCES.

1st Epode, *Hell from beneath is moved for thee*, &c. ver. 9, 10, 11.

2d Strophe, *How art thou fallen from Heaven*, &c. ver. 12, 13, 14.

Flam'd foremost in the van of day:
How art thou fall'n, thou King of Light!
How fall'n from thy meridian height!
Who said'st the distant poles shall hear me, and obey.
High, o'er the stars, my sapphire throne shall glow,
And, as Jehovah's self, my voice the heav'ns shall bow.

II. 2.

He spake, he died. Distain'd with gore,
Beside yon yawning cavern hoar,
See, where his livid corse is laid.
The aged Pilgrim passing by,
Surveys him long with dubious eye;
And muses on his fate, and shakes his reverend head.
Just heav'ns! is thus thy pride imperial gone?
Is this poor heap of dust the King of Babylon?

II. 3.

Is this the Man whose nod
Made the Earth tremble: whose terrific rod
Levell'd her loftiest cities? Where he trod
Famine pursu'd, and frown'd;
Till Nature groaning round,

REFERENCES.

2d Antistrophe, *Yet thou shalt be brought down to Hell*, &c. ver. 15, 16.

2d Epode, *Is this the man that made the Earth tremble?* &c. ver. 16, 17, 18, 19.

Saw her rich realms transform'd to deserts dry;
While at his crowded prison's gate,
Grasping the keys of Fate,
Stood stern Captivity.
Vain Man! behold thy righteous doom;
Behold each neighb'ring monarch's tomb;
The trophied arch, the breathing bust,
The laurel shades their sacred dust:
While thou, vile Out-cast, on this hostile plain,
Moulder'st, a vulgar corse, among the vulgar slain.

III. 1.

No trophied arch, no breathing bust,
Shall dignify thy trampled dust:
No laurel flourish o'er thy grave.
For why, proud King, thy ruthless hand
Hurl'd Desolation o'er the land,
And crush'd the subject race, whom kings are born to save:
Eternal Infamy shall blast thy name,
And all thy sons shall share their impious Father's shame.

III. 2.

Rise, purple Slaughter! furious rise;
Unfold the terror of thine eyes;

REFERENCES.

3d Strophe, *Thou shalt not be joined to them in Burial*, &c. ver. 20.

3d Antistrophe, *Prepare Slaughter for his Children*, ver. 21, 22.

Dart thy vindictive shafts around:
Let no strange land a shade afford,
No conquer'd nations call them Lord;
Nor let their cities rise to curse the goodly ground.
For thus Jehovah swears; no Name, no Son,
No remnant, shall remain of haughty Babylon.

III. 3.

Thus saith the righteous Lord:
My Vengeance shall unsheath the flaming sword;
O'er all thy realms my Fury shall be pour'd.
Where yon proud city stood,
I'll spread the stagnant flood;
And there the Bittern in the sedge shall lurk,
Moaning with sullen strain:
While, sweeping o'er the plain,
Destruction ends her work.
Yes, on mine holy mountain's brow,
I'll crush this proud Assyrian foe.
Th' irrevocable word is spoke.
From Judah's neck the galling yoke
Spontaneous falls, she shines with wonted state;
Thus by MYSELF I swear, and what I swear is Fate.

REFERENCES.

3d Epode, *Saith the Lord, I will also make it a possession for the Bittern*, &c. ver.——22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27.

ELEGIES.

ELEGY I.

TO A YOUNG NOBLEMAN LEAVING THE UNIVERSITY.

Ere yet, ingenuous Youth, thy steps retire
From Cam's smooth margin, and the peaceful vale,
Where Science call'd thee to her studious quire,
And met thee musing in her cloisters pale;
O! let thy friend (and may he boast the name)
Breathe from his artless reed one parting lay;
A lay like this thy early Virtues claim,
And this let voluntary Friendship pay.
Yet know, the time arrives, the dangerous time,
When all those Virtues, opening now so fair,
Transplanted to the world's tempestuous clime,
Must learn each Passion's boist'rous breath to bear.
There, if Ambition pestilent and pale,
Or Luxury should taint their vernal glow;
If cold Self-interest, with her chilling gale,
Should blast th' unfolding blossoms ere they blow;

If mimic hues, by Art, or Fashion spread,
Their genuine, simple colouring should supply,
O! with them may these laureate honours fade;
And with them (if it can) my Friendship die.
Then do not blame, if, tho' myself inspire,
Cautious I strike the panegyric string;
The Muse full oft pursues a meteor fire,
And, vainly vent'rous, soars on waxen wing.
Too actively awake at Friendship's voice,
The Poet's bosom pours the fervent strain,
Till sad Reflection blames the hasty choice,
And oft invokes Oblivion's aid in vain.
Call we the Shade of Pope, from that blest bower
Where thron'd he sits with many a tuneful Sage;
Ask, if he ne'er bemoans that hapless hour
When St. John's name * illumin'd Glory's page?
Ask, if the wretch, who dar'd his mem'ry stain,
Ask, if his country's, his religion's foe
Deserv'd the meed that Marlbro' fail'd to gain,
The deathless meed, he only could bestow?
The Bard will tell thee, the misguided praise
Clouds the celestial sunshine of his breast;
Ev'n now, repentant of his erring Lays,
He heaves a sigh amid the realms of rest.
If Pope thro' Friendship fail'd, indignant view,
Yet pity Dryden; hark, whene'er he sings,

* Alluding to this couplet of Mr. Pope's,
To Cato Virgil paid one honest line,
O let my Country's friends *illumine* mine.

How Adulation drops her courtly dew
On titled Rhymers, and inglorious Kings.
See, from the depths of his exhaustless mine,
His glittering stores the tuneful Spendthrift throws;
Where Fear, or Interest bids, behold they shine;
Now grace a Cromwell's, now a Charles's brows.
Born with too generous, or too mean a heart,
Dryden! in vain to thee those stores were lent:
Thy sweetest numbers but a trifling Art;
Thy strongest diction idly eloquent.
The simplest Lyre, if Truth direct its Lays,
Warbles a melody ne'er heard from thine:
Not to disgust with false, or venal praise,
Was Parnell's modest fame, and may be mine
Go then, my Friend, nor let thy candid breast
Condemn me, if I check the plausive string;
Go to the wayward world; complete the rest;
Be, what the purest Muse would wish to sing.
Be still thyself; that open path of Truth,
Which led thee here, let Manhood firm pursue;
Retain the sweet simplicity of Youth,
And, all thy Virtue dictates, dare to do.
Still scorn, with conscious pride, the mask of Art;
On Vice's front let fearful Caution lour,
And teach the diffident, discreeter part
Of knaves that plot, and fools that fawn for power.

), round thy brow when Age's honours spread,
When Death's cold hand unstrings thy Mason's lyre,
Vhen the green turf lies lightly on his head,
Thy worth shall some superior bard inspire:
le, to the amplest bounds of Time's domain,
On Rapture's plume shall give thy Name to fly;
'or trust, with reverence trust this * Sabine strain:
"The Muse forbids the virtuous Man to die."

Written in 1753.

ELEGY. II.

WRITTEN IN THE GARDEN OF A FRIEND.

WHILE o'er my head this laurel-woven bower
Its arch of glittering verdure wildly flings,
an Fancy slumber? can the tuneful Power,
That rules my lyre, neglect her wonted strings?
Vo; if the blighting East deform'd the plain,
If this gay bank no balmy sweets exhal'd,
till should the grove re-echo to my strain,
And friendship prompt the theme, where beauty fail'd.
'or he, whose careless art this foliage drest,
Who bad these twisting braids of woodbine bend,
Ie first, with truth and virtue, taught my breast
Where best to chuse, and best to fix a friend.

* ——Dignum laude virum
Musa vetat mori. HORACE.

How well does Mem'ry note the golden day,
What time, reclin'd in Marg'ret's studious glade,
My mimic reed first tun'd the * Dorian lay,
" Unseen, unheard, beneath an hawthorn shade?"
'Twas there we met; the Muses hail'd the hour;
The same desires, the same ingenuous arts
Inspir'd us both; we own'd, and blest the power
That join'd at once our studies, and our hearts.
O! since those days, when Science spread the feast,
When emulative Youth its relish lent,
Say, has one genuine Joy e'er warm'd my breast?
Enough; if Joy was his, be mine Content.
To thirst for praise his temperate Youth forbore;
He fondly wish'd not for a poet's name;
Much did he love the Muse, but Quiet more,
And, tho' he might command, he slighted Fame.
Hither, in manhood's prime, he wisely fled
From all that Folly, all that Pride approves;
To this soft scene a tender Partner led;
This laurel shade was witness to their loves.
" Begone," he cry'd, " Ambition's air-drawn plan;
" Hence with perplexing pomp, unwieldy wealth:
" Let me not seem, but be the happy man,
" Possest of Love, of Competence, and Health."

* Musæus, the first poem in this Collection, written while the Author was a Scholar of St. John's College in Cambridge. See page 13.

Smiling he spake, nor did the Fates withstand;
In rural arts the peaceful moments flew:
Say, lovely Lawn! that felt his forming hand,
How soon thy surface shone with verdure new;
How soon obedient Flora brought her store,
And o'er thy breast a shower of fragrance flung:
Vertumnus came; his earliest blooms he bore,
And thy rich sides with waving purple hung:
Then to the sight, he call'd yon stately spire,
He pierc'd th' opposing oak's luxuriant shade;
Bad yonder crowding hawthorns low retire,
Nor veil the glories of the golden mead.
Hail, sylvan wonders, hail! and hail the hand,
Whose native taste thy native charms display'd,
And taught one little acre to command
Each envied happiness of scene, and shade.
Is there a hill, whose distant azure bounds
The ample range of Scarsdale's proud domain,
A mountain hoar, that yon wild Peak surrounds,
But lends a willing beauty to thy plain?
And, lo! in yonder path I spy my friend;
He looks the guardian genius of the grove,
Mild as * the fabled Form that whilom deign'd,
At Milton's call, in Harefield's haunts to rove.

* See the Description of the Genius of the Wood, in Milton's Arcades.

> For know, by lot, from Jove, I am the Power
> Of this fair wood, and live in oaken bower;
> To nurse the saplings tall, and curl the grove
> With ringlets quaint, &c.

Blest Spirit, come! tho' pent in mortal mould,
I'll yet invoke thee by that purer name;
O come, a portion of thy bliss unfold,
From Folly's maze my wayward step reclaim.
Too long, alas, my inexperienc'd youth,
Misled by flattering Fortune's specious tale,
Has left the rural reign of Peace, and Truth,
The huddling brook, cool cave, and whispering vale.
Won to the world, a candidate for praise,
Yet, let me boast, by no ignoble art,
Too oft the public ear has heard my lays,
Too much its vain applause has touch'd my heart;
But now, ere Custom binds his powerful chains,
Come, from the base enchanter set me free,
While yet my soul its first, best taste retains,
Recall that soul to reason, peace, and thee.
Teach me, like thee, to muse on Nature's page,
To mark each wonder in Creation's plan,
Each mode of being trace, and, humbly sage,
Deduce from these the genuine powers of Man;
Of Man, while warm'd with Reason's purer ray,
No tool of policy, no dupe to pride;
Before vain Science led his taste astray;
When conscience was his law, and God his guide.
This let me learn, and learning let me live
The lesson o'er. From that great guide of truth
O may my suppliant soul the boon receive
To tread thro' age the footsteps of thy youth.

Written in 1758.

*ELEGY III.

TO THE REV. MR. HURD.

FRIEND of my youth, who, when the willing Muse
Stream'd o'er my breast her warm poetic rays,
Saw'st the fresh seeds their vital powers diffuse,
And fed'st them with the fost'ring dew of praise!
Whate'er the produce of th' unthrifty soil,
The leaves, the flowers, the fruits, to thee belong:
The labourer earns the wages of his toil;
Who form'd the Poet, well may claim the song.
Yes, 'tis my pride to own, that taught by thee
My conscious soul superior flights essay'd;
Learnt from thy lore the Poet's dignity,
And spurn'd the hirelings of the rhyming trade.
Say, scenes of Science, say, thou haunted stream!
(For oft my Muse-led steps did'st thou behold)
How on thy banks I rifled every theme,
That Fancy fabled in her age of gold.
How oft I cry'd, "O come, thou tragic Queen!
"March from thy Greece with firm majestic tread!
"Such as when Athens saw thee fill her scene,
"When Sophocles thy choral Graces led:
"Saw thy proud pall its purple length devolve;
"Saw thee uplift the glitt'ring dagger high;
"Ponder with fixed brow thy deep resolve,
"Prepar'd to strike, to triumph, and to die.

* This Elegy was prefixt to the former editions of Caractacus, as dedicatory of that poem.

" Bring then to Britain's plain that choral throng;
" Display thy buskin'd pomp, thy golden lyre;
" Give her historic Forms the soul of song,
" And mingle Attic art with Shakspeare's fire."
" Ah, what, fond boy, dost thou presume to claim?"
The Muse reply'd: "Mistaken suppliant, know,
" To light in Shakspeare's breast the dazzling flame
" Exhausted all Parnassus could bestow.
" True; Art remains; and, if from his bright page
" Thy mimic power one vivid beam can seize,
" Proceed; and in that best of tasks engage,
" Which tends at once to profit, and to please."
She spake; and Harewood's Towers spontaneous rose;
Soft virgin warblings echo'd thro' the grove;
And fair Elfrida pour'd forth all her woes,
The hapless pattern of connubial Love.
More awful scenes old Mona next display'd;
Her caverns gloom'd, her forests wav'd on high,
While flam'd within their consecrated shade
The Genius stern of British liberty.
And see, my Hurd! to thee those scenes consign'd;
O! take and stamp them with thy honour'd name.
Around the page be friendship's chaplet twin'd;
And, if they find the road to honest Fame,
Perchance the candour of some nobler age
May praise the Bard, who bad gay Folly bear

* Her cheap applauses to the busy stage,
And leave him pensive Virtue's silent tear
Chose too to consecrate his fav'rite strain
To Him, who grac'd by ev'ry liberal art,
That best might shine among the learned train,
Yet more excell'd in morals and in heart:
Whose equal mind could see vain Fortune shower
Her flimsy favours on the fawning crew,
While, in low Thurcaston's sequester'd bower,
She fixt him distant from Promotion's view:
Yet, shelter'd there by calm Contentment's wing,
Pleas'd he could smile, and, with sage Hooker's eye,
† "See from his mother earth God's blessings spring,
"And eat his bread in peace and privacy."

Written in 1759.

* Nil equidem feci (tu scis hoc ipse) theatris;
Musa nec in plausus ambitiosa mea est.
Ovid. Trist. Lib. V. El. vii. 23.

† Verbatim from a letter of Hooker's to Archbishop Whitgift. "But, my Lord, I shall never be able to finish "what I have begun, [viz. his immortal Treatise on Ec- "clesiastical Polity] unless I be removed into some quiet "country parsonage, *where I may see God's blessings spring* "*out of my mother earth, and eat my own bread in peace and* "*privacy.*" See his Life in the Biographia Britannica.

ELEGY IV.

ON THE DEATH OF A LADY.

THE midnight clock has toll'd; and hark, the bell
Of Death beats slow! heard ye the note profound?
It pauses now; and now, with rising knell,
Flings to the hollow gale its sullen sound.
Yes *** is dead. Attend the strain,
Daughters of Albion! Ye that, light as air,
So oft have tript in her fantastic train,
With hearts as gay, and faces half as fair:
For she was fair beyond your brightest bloom:
(This Envy owns, since now her bloom is fled)
Fair as the Forms that, wove in Fancy's loom,
Float in light vision round the Poet's head.
Whene'er with soft serenity she smil'd,
Or caught the orient blush of quick surprise,
How sweetly mutable, how brightly wild,
The liquid lustre darted from her eyes?
Each look, each motion wak'd a new-born grace,
That o'er her form its transient glory cast:
Some lovelier wonder soon usurp'd the place,
Chas'd by a charm still lovelier than the last.
That bell again! It tells us what she is:
On what she was no more the strain prolong:
Luxuriant Fancy pause: an hour like this
Demands the tribute of a serious Song.

Maria claims it from that sable bier,
Where cold and wan the slumberer rests her head;
In still small whispers to Reflection's ear,
She breathes the solemn dictates of the dead.
O catch the awful notes, and lift them loud;
Proclaim the theme, by Sage, by Fool rever'd;
Hear it, ye Young, ye Vain, ye Great, ye Proud!
'Tis Nature speaks, and Nature will be heard.
Yes, ye shall hear, and tremble as ye hear,
While high with health, your hearts exulting leap:
Ev'n in the midst of Pleasure's mad career,
The mental Monitor shall wake and weep.
For say, than ***'s propitious star,
What brighter planet on your births arose;
Or gave of Fortune's gifts an ampler share,
In life to lavish, or by death to lose!
Early to lose; while, borne on busy wing,
Ye sip the nectar of each varying bloom:
Nor fear, while basking in the beams of spring,
The wintry storm that sweeps you to the tomb.
Think of her fate! revere the heav'nly hand
That led her hence, though soon, by steps so slow;
Long at her couch Death took his patient stand,
And menac'd oft, and oft withheld the blow:
To give Reflection time, with lenient art,
Each fond delusion from her soul to steal;
Teach her from Folly peaceably to part,
And wean her from a world she lov'd so well.
Say, are ye sure his Mercy shall extend
To you so long a span? Alas, ye sigh:
Make then, while yet ye may, your God your friend,
And learn with equal ease to sleep or die!

Nor think the Muse, whose sober voice ye hear,
Contracts with bigot frown her sullen brow;
Casts round Religion's orb the mists of fear,
Or shades with horrors, what with smiles should glow.
No; she would warm you with seraphic fire,
Heirs as ye are of heav'n's eternal day;
Would bid you boldly to that heav'n aspire,
Not sink and slumber in your cells of clay.
Know, ye were form'd to range yon azure field,
In yon ethereal founts of bliss to lave;
Force then, secure in Faith's protecting shield,
The Sting from Death, the Vict'ry from the grave.
Is this the bigot's rant? Away ye Vain,
Your hopes, your fears, in doubt, in dulness steep:
Go sooth your souls in sickness, grief, or pain,
With the sad solace of eternal sleep *.

* In a book of French verses, entitled *Oeuvres du Philosophe de sans Souci*, and lately reprinted at *Berlin* by authority, under the title of *Poesies Diverses*, may be found an epistle to Marshal Keith, written professedly against the immortality of the Soul. By way of specimen of the whole, take following lines:

De l'avenir, cher Keith, jugeons par le passé;
Comme avant que je fusse il n'avoit point pensé,
De meme, apres ma mort, quand toutes mes parties
Par le corruption seront aneanties,
Par un meme destin il ne pensera plus;
Non, rien n'est plus certain, soyons-en convaincu, &c.

It is to this epistle that the rest of the Elegy alludes.

Yet will I praise you, triflers as ye are,
More than those Preachers of your fav'rite creed,
Who proudly swell the brazen throat of War,
Who form the phalanx, bid the battle bleed;
Nor wish for more: who conquer, but to die.
Hear, Folly, hear; and triumph in the tale:
Like you, they reason; not, like you, enjoy
The breeze of bliss, that fills your silken sail:
On Pleasure's glitt'ring stream ye gaily steer
Your little course to cold Oblivion's shore:
They dare the storm, and, through th' inclement year,
Stem the rough surge, and brave the torrent's roar.
Is it for Glory? that just Fate denies.
Long must the Warrior moulder in his shroud,
Ere from her trump the heav'n-breath'd accents rise,
That lift the Hero from the fighting crowd.
Is it his grasp of Empire to extend?
To curb the fury of insulting foes?
Ambition, cease: the idle contest end:
'Tis but a Kingdom thou canst win or lose.
And why must murder'd myriads lose their all,
(If Life be all) why Desolation lour,
With famish'd frown, on this affrighted ball,
That thou may'st flame the meteor of an hour?
Go wiser ye, that flutter Life away,
Crown with the mantling Juice the goblet high;
Weave the light dance, with festive freedom gay,
And live your moment, since the next ye die.

Yet know, vain Sceptics, know, th' Almighty mind,
Who breath'd on Man a portion of his fire,
Bad his free Soul, by earth nor time confin'd,
To Heav'n, to Immortality aspire.
Nor shall the Pile of Hope, his Mercy rear'd,
By vain Philosophy be e'er destroy'd:
Eternity, by all or wish'd or fear'd,
Shall be by all or suffer'd or enjoy'd.

Written in 1760.

EPITAPHS.

EPITAPH I.

ON MRS. MASON.

IN BRISTOL CATHEDRAL.

TAKE, holy Earth! all that my soul holds dear:
Take that best gift which Heav'n so lately gave:
To Bristol's fount I bore with trembling care
Her faded form: she bow'd to taste the wave
And died. Does Youth, does Beauty, read the line?
Does sympathetic fear their breasts alarm?
Speak, dead Maria! breathe a strain divine:
Ev'n from the grave thou shalt have power to charm.
Bid them be chaste, be innocent, like thee;
Bid them in Duty's sphere as meekly move;
And if so fair, from vanity as free;
As firm in friendship, and as fond in love.
Tell them, tho' 'tis an awful thing to die,
('Twas ev'n to thee) yet the dread path once trod,
Heav'n lifts its everlasting portals high,
And bids "the Pure in heart behold their God."

EPITAPH II.

ON THE HONOURABLE MISS DRUMMOND,

IN THE CHURCH OF BRODSWORTH, YORKSHIRE.

HERE sleeps what once was Beauty, once was Grace;
Grace, that with tenderness and sense combin'd
To form that harmony of soul and face,
Where beauty shines the mirror of the mind.
Such was the Maid, that in the morn of youth,
In virgin innocence, in nature's pride,
Blest with each art that owes its charm to truth,
Sunk in her Father's fond embrace, and died.
He weeps: O venetrate the holy tear:
Faith lends her aid to ease Affliction's load;
The parent mourns his Child upon her bier,
The Christian yields an Angel to his God.

DRAMATIC POEMS.

ELFRIDA.

WRITTEN ON THE MODEL OF

THE ANCIENT GREEK TRAGEDY.

First published in the Year 1751.

THE ARGUMENT.

EDGAR, King of England, having heard the beauty of ELFRIDA, daughter of ORGAR, Earl of Devonshire, highly celebrated; sent his favourite minister ATHELWOLD, to the father's castle, to discover whether she was really so beautiful as fame reported her to be; and if she was, to offer her his crown in marriage. ATHELWOLD, on seeing her, fell violently in love with her himself; and married her; conveying her soon after to his own castle in Harewood Forest, where he visited her by stealth from court; and in his absence left her with a train of British virgins, who form the CHORUS. After three months, ORGAR, disapproving this confinement of his daughter, came disguised to Harewood to discover the cause of it. His arrival opens the drama. The incidents, which are produced by ATHELWOLD'S return from court (who was absent when ORGAR came to his castle) and afterwards by the unexpected visit of the KING, form the EPISODE of the Tragedy; the feigned pardon of ATHELWOLD, drawn from the KING by the earnest intercessions of ELFRIDA, brings on the PERIPETIA, or change of fortune; and the single combat between the KING and ATHELWOLD, in which the latter is slain, occasions ELFRIDA to take the vow, which completes the CATASTROPHE.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

ORGAR, Earl of Devonshire.

CHORUS of British Virgins.

ELFRIDA, Daughter to ORGAR.

ATHELWOLD, Husband to ELFRIDA.

EDWIN, a Messenger.

EDGAR, King of England.

ORGAR, disguised in a Peasant's Habit, speaks the Prologue.

SCENE, a Lawn before ATHELWOLD's Castle in Harewood Forest.

ELFRIDA.

A

DRAMATIC POEM.

ORGAR.

)w nobly does this venerable wood,
t with the glories of the orient sun,
bosom yon fair mansion! The soft air
ıtes me with most cool and temp'rate breath;
d, as I tread, the flow'r-besprinkled lawn
ds up a gale of fragrance. I should guess,
:'er Content deign'd visit mortal clime,
ıs was her place of dearest residence.
ınt Heav'n! I find it such. 'Tis now three months
ce first Earl Athelwold espous'd my daughter.
then besought me, for some little space
: nuptials might be secret; many reasons,
said, induc'd to this: I made no pause,
, resting on his prudence, to his will
'e absolute concurrence. Soon as married,
to this secret seat convey'd Elfrida;

Convey'd her as by stealth, enjoy'd, and left her:
Yet not without I know not what excuse
Of call to court, of Edgar's royal friendship,
And England's welfare. To his prince he went:
And since, as by intelligence I gather,
He oft returns to this his cloister'd wife;
But ever with a privacy most studied;
Borrowing disguises till inventive art
Can scarce supply him with variety.
His visits, as they're stol'n, are also short;
Seldom beyond the circuit of one sun;
Then back to court, while she his absence mourns
Full many a lonely hour. I brook not this.
Had Athelwold espous'd some base-born peasant
This usage had been apt: but when he took
My daughter to his arms, he took a virgin,
Thro' whose rich veins the blood of British King
Ran in unsullied stream. Her lineage sure
Might give her place and notice with the nobles
In Edgar's court. Elfrida's beauty too
(I speak not from a father's foolish fondness)
Would shine amid the fairest, and reflect
No vulgar glory on that beauty's master.
This act bespeaks the madman. Who, that own'd
An em'rald, jasper, or rich chrysolite,
Would hide its lustre, or not bid it blaze
Conspicuous on his brow? Haply Athelwold
May have espous'd some other. 'Sdeath he durs
not.
My former feats in arms must have inform'd him
That Orgar, while he liv'd, would never prove
A traitor to his honour. If he has——

This aged arm is not so much unstrung
By slack'ning years, but just revenge will brace it.
And, by yon awful heav'n —But hold, my rage,
I came to search into this matter coolly.
Hence, to conceal the father and the earl,
This pilgrim's staff, and scrip, and all these marks
Of vagrant poverty.

CHORUS (WITHIN.)

Hail to thy living light, ambrosial Morn!
All hail thy roseate ray!

ORGAR.

But hark, the sound of sweetest minstrelsy
Breaks on mine ear. The females, I suppose,
Whom Athelwold has left my child's attendants;
That, when she wails the absence of her lord,
Their lenient airs, and sprightly-fancied songs,
May steal away her woes. See, they approach:
This grove shall shroud me till they cease their strain;
Then I'll address them with some feigned tale.
[*He retires.*

CHORUS.

ODE.

Hail to thy living light,
Ambrosial Morn! all hail thy roseate ray:
That bids young Nature all her charms display
In varied beauty bright;
That bids each dewy-spangled flowret rise,
And dart around its vermeil dies;

Bids silver lustre grace yon sparkling tide,
That winding warbles down the mountain's side.
Away, ye Goblins all,
Wont the bewilder'd traveller to daunt;
Whose vagrant feet have trac'd your secret haunt
Beside some lonely wall,
Or shatter'd ruin of a moss-grown tow'r,
Where, at pale midnight's stillest hour,
Thro' each rough chink the solemn orb of night
Pours momentary gleams of trembling light.
Away, ye Elves, away:
Shrink at ambrosial Morning's living ray;
That living ray, whose pow'r benign
Unfolds the scene of glory to our eye,
Where, thron'd in artless majesty,
The cherub Beauty sits on Nature's rustic shrine.—

CHORUS, ORGAR.

CHORUS.

Silence, my sisters. Whence this rudeness, stranger,
That thus has prompted thine unbidden ear
To listen to our strains?

ORGAR.

Your pardon, Virgins:
I meant not rudeness, tho' I dar'd to listen;
For ah! what ear so fortify'd and barr'd
Against the force of powerful harmony,
But would with transport to such sweet assailants
Surrender its attention? Never yet
Have I pass'd by the night-bird's fav'rite spray,

What time she pours her wild and artless song,
Without attentive pause and silent rapture;
How could I then, with savage disregard,
Hear voices tun'd by nature sweet as her's,
Grac'd with all art's addition?

CHORUS.

Thy mean garb,
And this thy courtly phrase but ill accord.
Whence, and what art thou, stranger?

ORGAR.

Virgins, know
These limbs have oft been wrapt in richer vest:
But what avails it now? all have their fate;
And mine has been most wretched.

CHORUS.

May we ask
What cruel cause—

ORGAR.

No! let this hapless breast
Still hide the melancholy tale.

CHORUS.

We know,
There oft is found an avarice in grief;
And the wan eye of Sorrow loves to gaze
Upon its secret hoard of treasur'd woes
In pining solitude. Perhaps thy mind
Takes the same pensive cast: if not, permit
That we, in social sympathy, may drop
The tender tear.

ORGAR.

Ah! ill would it become ye,
To let the woes of such a wretch as I am,
E'er dim your bright eyes with a pitying tear.

CHORUS.

The eye that will not weep another's sorrow,
Should boast no gentler brightness than the glare
That reddens in the eye-ball of the wolf.
Let us entreat—

ORGAR.

Know, Virgins, I was born
To ample property of lands and flocks,
On this side Tweeda's stream. My youth and vigor
Achiev'd full many a feat of martial prowess:
Nor was my skill in chivalry unnoted
In the fair volume of my sov'reign's love;
Who ever held me in his best esteem,
And closest to his person. When he paid,
What all must pay, to fate; and short-liv'd Edwy
Mounted the vacant throne, which now his brother
Fills (as loud fame reports) right royally;
I then, unfit for pageantry and courts,
Sat down in peace among my faithful vassals,
At my paternal seat. But ah! not long
Had I enjoy'd the sweets of that recess,
Ere by the savage inroads of base hinds,
That sallied frequent from the Scottish heights,

My lands were all laid waste, my people murder'd;
And I, thro' impotence of age unfit
To quell their brutal rage, was forc'd to drag
My mis'ries thro' the land, a friendless wand'rer.

CHORUS.

We pity and condole thy wretched state,
But we can do no more; which, on thy part,
Claims just returns of pity: for whose lot
Demands it more than theirs, whom fate forbids
To taste the joys of courteous charity;
To wipe the trickling tears, which dew the cheek
Of palsied age; to smooth its furrow'd brow,
And pay its gray hairs each due reverence?
Yet such delight we are forbid to taste!
For 'tis our lord's command, that not a stranger,
However high or lowly his degree,
Have entrance at these gates.

ORGAR.

Who may this tyrant—

CHORUS.

Alas, no tyrant he; the more our wonder
At this harsh mandate: Tenderness and Pity
Have made his breast their home. He is a man
More apt, thro' inborn gentleness to err
In giving mercy's tide too free a course,
Than with a thrifty and illiberal hand
To stint its channel. This his praise you'll hear
The universal theme in Edgar's court:
For Edgar ranks him first in his high favour;

Loads him with honours, which the Earl receive
As does the golden censer frankincense,
Only to spread a sacred gale of blessings
Around on all.

ORGAR.

Methinks this pleasing portrait
Bears strong resemblance of Lord Athelwold.

CHORUS.

Himself: no Briton but has heard his fame.

ORGAR.

'Tis wond'rous strange; can you conceive no cau
For this his conduct?

CHORUS.

None, that we may trust.

ORGAR.

Your garbs bespeak you for the fair attendant
Of some illustrious dame, the wife, or sister
Of this dread earl.

CHORUS.

On this head too, old man,
We are commanded a religious silence:
Which strictly we obey; for well we know
Fidelity's a virtue that ennobles
Ev'n servitude itself: Farewell, depart
With our best wishes; we do trespass much
To hold this open converse with a stranger.

ORGAR.

Stay, Virgins, stay; have ye no friendly shed,
But bord'ring on your castle, where these limt

Might lay their load of mis'ry for an hour?
Have ye no food, however mean and homely,
Wherewith I might support declining nature?
Ev'n while I speak, I find my spirits fail;
And well, full well, I know, these trembling feet,
Ere I can pace a hundred steps, will sink
Beneath their wretched burthen.

CHORUS.

Piteous sight!
What shall we do, my sisters? To admit
This man beneath the roof, would be to scorn
The Earl's strict interdict; and yet my heart
Bleeds to behold that white, old, rev'rend head
Bow'd with such misery.—Yes, we must aid him.
Hie thee, poor Pilgrim, to yon neighb'ring bow'r,
O'er which an old oak spreads his awful arm,
Mantled in brownest foliage, and beneath
The ivy, gadding from th' untwisted stem,
Curtains each verdant side. There thou may'st rest,
There too, perchance, some of our sisterhood
May bring thee speedy sustenance.

ORGAR.

Kind Heav'n!
Reward ——

CHORUS.

Ah! stay not here to thank us,
But haste to give thine age this meet repose.
That done, we do conjure thee leave the place
With cautious secrecy; for was it known,

That thus we trespass'd on our lord's commar
The consequence were fatal.

ORGAR.

Fairest Maid !
Think not I'll basely draw down punishment
On my preservers. I retire. May blessings
Shower'd from yon fount of bliss repay your kii
ness. [*Exit Org*

SEMICHORUS.

Yes, sisters, yes, when pale distress
Implores your aiding hand,
Let not a partial faithfulness,
Let not a mortal's vain command
Urge you to break th' unalterable laws
Of heav'n-descended Charity.
Ah! follow still the soft-ey'd Deity;
For know, each path she draws
Along the plain of life,
Meets at the central dome of heart-felt joy.
Follow the soft-ey'd Deity;
She bids ye, as ye hope for blessings, bless.
Aid then the gen'ral cause of gen'ral happines

SEMICHORUS.

Humanity, thy awful strain
Shall ever greet our ear,
Sonorous, sweet, and clear.
And as amid the sprightly-swelling train
Of dulcet notes, that breathe
From flute or lyre,

The deep base rolls its manly melody,
Guiding the tuneful choir;
So thou, Humanity, shalt lead along
Th' accordant passions in their moral song,
And give our mental concert truest harmony.

CHORUS.

But see, Elfrida comes.
Should we again resume our former strain,
And hail the Morn that paints her waking beauties;
Or stay her gentle bidding? Rather stay;
For, as I think, she seems in pensive mood:
And there are times when to the sorrowing soul
Ev'n harmony is harshness.

ELFRIDA, CHORUS.

ELFRIDA.

O my Virgins,
With what a leaden and retarding weight,
Does Expectation load the wing of Time?
Alas, how have these three dull hours crept on,
Since first the crimson mantle of the morn
Skirted yon gay horizon? Say, my friends,
Have I miscounted? Did not Athelwold
At parting fix this morn for his return?
This dear long-wish'd for morn! He did, he did,
And seal'd it with a kiss; I could not err.
And yet he comes not. He was wont outstrip
The sun's most early speed, and make its rising
To me unwish'd and needless. This delay
Creates strange doubts and scruples in my breast.

Courts throng with beauties, and my Athelwold
Has a soft, susceptible heart, as prone
To yield its love to ev'ry sparkling eye,
As is the musk-rose to dispense its fragrance
To ev'ry whisp'ring breeze; perhaps he's false,
Perhaps Elfrida's wretched.

CHORUS.

See, Elfrida,
Ah see! how round yon branching elm the ivy
Clasps its green folds, and poisons what supports it.
Not less injurious to the shoots of Love
Is sickly jealousy.

ELFRIDA.

My mind nor pines
With jealousy, nor rests secure in peace.
Who loves, must fear; and sure who loves like me,
Must greatly fear.

CHORUS.

Yet whence the cause? Your Earl
Has ever yet (this little breach excepted)
Been punctual to appointment. Did his eye
Glow with less ardent passion when he left you,
Than at the first blest meeting? No! I mark'd him,
His parting glance was that of fervent love,
And constancy unalter'd. Do not fear him.

ELFRIDA.

I should not fear him, were his present stay
The only cause. Alas, it is not so!

Why comes my Earl so secret to these arms?
Why, but because he dreads the just reproach
Of some deluded fair one? Why am I
Here shrouded up, like the pale Votarist,
Who knows no visitant, save the lone owl,
That nightly leaves his ivy-shrouded cell,
And sails on slow wing thro' the cloister'd aisles,
List'ning her saintly orisons? Why am I
Deny'd to follow my departed Lord
Whene'er his duty calls him to the palace?

CHORUS.

Covet not that; the noblest proof of love
That Athelwold can give, is still to guard
Your beauties from the blast of courtly gales.
The crimson blush of virgin modesty,
The delicate soft tints of innocence
There all fly off, and leave no boast behind
But well-rang'd, faded features. Ah, Elfrida,
Should you be doom'd, which happier fate forbid!
To drag your hours through all that nauseous scene
Of pageantry and vice; your purer breast,
True to its virtuous relish, soon would heave
A fervent sigh for innocence and Harewood.

ELFRIDA.

You much mistake me, Virgins; the throng'd palace
Were undesir'd by me, did not that palace
Detain my Athelwold. If he were here,
His presence would convert this range of oaks
To stately columns; these gay-liv'ried flow'rs
To troops of gallant ladies; and yon deer,

That just their antlers forth in sportive fray,
To armed knights at joust or tournament.
If Athelwold dwelt here; if no ambition
Could lure his steps from love, and this still forest;
If I might never moan his time of absence,
Longer than that which serv'd him for the chase,
Or of the wolf, or stag; or when he bore
The hood-wink'd falcon forth; might these, my Virgins,
And these alone, be Love's short intervals,
I should not have one thought remote from Harewood.

CHORUS.

And would you wish that Athelwold should slight
The weal of England, and on these light toys
Waste his unvalued hours? No, fond Elfrida;
His active soul is wing'd for nobler flights.

ELFRIDA.

What then, must England's welfare hold my Earl
For ever from these shades?

CHORUS.

We say not that.
The youth, who bathes in Pleasure's tempting stream
At well-judg'd intervals, feels all his soul
Nerv'd with recruited strength; but if too oft
He swims in sportive mazes through the flood,
It chills his languid virtue. For this cause
Your Earl forbids, that these enchanting groves,
And their fair mistress, should possess him wholly.

He knows he has a country and a king,
That claim his first attention; yet be sure,
'Twill not be long, ere his unbending mind
Shall lose in sweet oblivion ev'ry care,
Among th' embow'ring shades that veil Elfrida.

ELFRIDA.

O be that speech prophetic; may he soon
Seek these embow'ring shades! Meanwhile, my friends,
Sooth me with harmony. I know full well
That ye were nurs'd in Cornwall's wizard caves,
And oft have pac'd the fairy-peopled vales
Of Devon, where Posterity retains
Some vein of that old minstrelsy, which breath'd
Through each time-honour'd grove of British oak.
There, where the spreading consecrated boughs
Fed the sage misletoe, the holy Druids
Lay rapt in moral musings; while the Bards
Call'd from their solemn harps such lofty airs,
As drew down Fancy from the realms of light
To paint some radiant vision on their minds,
Of high mysterious import. But on me
Such strains sublime were wasted: I but ask
A sprightly song to speed the lazy flight
Of these dull hours. And Music sure can find
A magic spell to make them skim their round,
Swift as the swallow circles. Try its power:
While I, from yonder hillock, watch his coming.

[*Exit Elfrida.*

CHORUS.

ODE.

The Turtle tells her plaintive tale,
Sequester'd in some shadowy vale;
The Lark in radiant ether floats,
And swells his wild ecstatic notes:
Meanwhile on yonder hawthorn spray
The Linnet wakes her temp'rate lay;
She haunts no solitary shade,
She flutters o'er no sun-shine mead,
No love-lorn griefs depress her song,
No raptures lift it loudly high,
But soft she trills, amid th' aerial throng,
Smooth simple strains of sob'rest harmony.

Sweet Bird! like thine our lay shall flow,
Nor gaily brisk, nor sadly slow;
For to thy note sedate, and clear,
Content still lends a list'ning ear.
Reclin'd this mossy bank along,
Oft has she heard thy careless song:
Why hears not now? What fairer grove
From Harewood lures her devious love?
What fairer grove than Harewood knows,
More woodland walks, more fragant gales,
More shadowy bowers, inviting soft repose,
More streams slow-wand'ring thro' her winding vales?

Perhaps to some lone cave the Rover flies,
Where lull'd in pious peace the Hermit lies.

For, from the Hall's tumultuous state,
Where banners wave with blazon'd gold,
ıere will the meek-ey'd Matron oft retreat,
ıd with the solemn Sage high converse hold.

There, Goddess, on the shaggy mound,
Where tumbling torrents roar around,
Where pendant mountains o'er your head
Stretch their reverential shade;
You listen, while the holy Seer
Slowly chaunts his vespers clear;
Or of his sparing mess partake,
The sav'ry pulse, the wheaten cake,
The bev'rage cool of limpid rill.
Then, rising light, your host you bless,
ıd o'er his saintly temples bland distil
raphic day-dreams of heav'n's happiness.

Where'er thou art, enchanting Power,
Thou soon wilt smile in Harewood's bower:
Soon will thy fairy feet be seen,
Printing this dew-impearled green;
Soon shall we mark thy gestures meek,
Thy glitt'ring eye, and dimpled cheek,
Among the welcome guests that move
Attendant on the state of love.
There, when the Sov'reign leads along
Of sports and smiles a jocund train,
ıen last, but loveliest of the lovely throng,
ıou com'st to soften, yet secure his reign.

ıd, hark, completing our prophetic lay,
ıe fleet hoof rattles o'er the flinty way;

Now nearer, and now nearer sounds.
Avaunt! ye vain, delusive fears.
Hark! Echo tells through Harewood's amplest bounds,
That Love, Content, and Athelwold appears.

ATHELWOLD, ELFRIDA, CHORUS.

ATHELWOLD.

Look ever thus; with that bright glance of joy
Thus always meet my transports. Let these arms
Thus ever fold me; and this cheek, that blooms
With all health's op'ning roses, press my lips,
Warm as at this blest moment.

ELFRIDA.

Athelwold,
I had prepar'd me many a stern rebuke;
Had arm'd my brow with frowns, and taught my eye
Th' averted glance of coldness, which might best
Greet such a loit'ring lover: but I find,
'Twas a vain task; for this my truant heart
Forgets each lesson, which resentment taught,
And in thy sight knows only to be happy.

ATHELWOLD.

My best Elfrida—Heav'ns! it cannot last.
The giddy height of joy, to which I'm lifted,
Is as a hanging rock, at whose low foot
The black and beating surge of Infamy
Rolls ready to receive, and sink my soul.

ELFRIDA.

So soon to fall into this musing mood—
I thought, my Lord, you promis'd you would leave
These looks behind at Court. Nay, 'twas the cause
Assign'd for this my residence at Harewood,
That you might never come to these fond arms,
But with a breast devoid of public care,
And fill'd alone with rapture and Elfrida.
Said you not so? Why then that pensive posture,
That down-cast eye? Surely the City's din,
And this calm grove, have lost their difference.
I'll with you to the palace.

ATHELWOLD.

Heav'n forbid!

ELFRIDA.

Nay, my best Lord, I meant it but in sport;
For should you bid me quit these blooming lawns,
For some bare heath, or drear unpeopled desert;
Believe me, I would think its wildness Eden,
If Athelwold with frequent visitation
Endear'd the savage scene: but yet I fear
My Father.

ATHELWOLD.

Ha! why him?

ELFRIDA.

You know his temper;
How jealous of his rank, and his trac'd lineage
From royal ancestry. I fear me much,

He will not brook you should conceal me long
In this lone privacy: No, he will deem it
Far unbecoming her whose veins are fill'd
With the rich stream of his nobility.
Should it be so, his hot and fiery nature,
I doubt, will blaze, and do some dreadful outrage.

ATHELWOLD.

He need not know it, or, if chance he should,
It matters not, if so this forest life
Seem of your own adoption and free choice.
And that it will so seem, I trust that love,
Which ever yet has met my wayward will
With pleas'd compliance, and unask'd assent.

ELFRIDA.

And ever shall: yet blame me not, my Lord,
If prying womanhood should prompt a wish
To learn the cause of this your strange commotion,
Which ever wakes, if I but drop one thought
Of quitting Harewood.

ATHELWOLD.

Go to the clear surface
Of yon unruffled lake, and, bending o'er it,
There read my answer.

ELFRIDA.

These are riddles, Sir—

ATHELWOLD.

No; for its glassy and reflecting surface
Will smile with charms too tempting for a palace.

ELFRIDA.

Does Athelwold distrust Elfrida's faith?

ATHELWOLD.

No: but he much distrusts Elfrida's beauty.

ELFRIDA.

Away: you trifle.

ATHELWOLD.

Never more in earnest;
I would not for the throne which Edgar sits on,
That Edgar should behold it.

ELFRIDA.

What, my Lord,
Think you the face, that caught your single heart,
Will make all hearts its captives? Vain surmise,
Yet grant it could; the face is your's alone:
Not Edgar's self would dare to seize it from you.
Edgar's a king, and not a tyrant.

ATHELWOLD.

True.
Edgar's a king, a just one; his firm feet
Walk ever in the fore-right road of honour:
Nor do I know what lure can draw his steps
Devious from that straight path, save only one:
That tempting lure is beauty. Ah! Elfrida,
Throw but the dazzling bait within his view,
The untam'd wolf does not with fiercer rage
Burst the slight bondage of the silken net,
Than he the ties of law. Late, very late,
Smit casually with young Matilda's face,

He strait commanded her reluctant mother
To yield her to his arms: nor had she 'scap'd
The violating fervor of his love,
Had not the prudent dame suborn'd her hand-
maid,
To take the unchaste office, and be led,
Veil'd in the mask of night, to Edgar's chamber
A counterfeit Matilda. As it chanc'd,
The damsel pleas'd the King, nor did detection
A whit abate his fondness; he forgave
The prudent mother, eas'd Matilda's fears,
And led the wanton minstrel to his court,
Where still she shares ——.

CHORUS.

Behold, Earl Athelwold,
A messenger arrives; his speed and aspect
Speak some important errand.

EDWIN, ATHELWOLD, ELFRIDA, CHORUS.

ATHELWOLD.

How now, Edwin?

EDWIN.

The King, my Lord, is on his way to Harewood.

ATHELWOLD.

The King!

EDWIN.

His purpose is to pass through Mercia:
And in a hasty message, some two hours
After you left the palace, this his pleasure

Was sent you by Lord Seofrid; withal
Commanding your attendance. You being absent,
He straitway turn'd his course through this fair forest,
Meaning to chase the stag; his train is small,
As was his purpose sudden.

ELFRIDA.

Good, my Lord,
Why thus perplex'd?

CHORUS.

Heav'ns! what a deep despair
Sits on his brow?

ELFRIDA.

The notice sure is short;
But that's a trifle, a small train requires
The smaller preparation: let him come.

ATHELWOLD.

Yes, let him come: so thou wilt say, Elfrida,
When thou hast heard my tale. Yes, let him come,
So wilt thou say, and let thy husband perish.
Yet shall these arms once more embrace thee closely,
Ere yet thou fly them as the pois'nous adder.
'Tis o'er: in that embrace Elfrida's love
Was buried; and in that embrace, the peace
Of wretched Athelwold.

ELFRIDA.

What may this be!

ATHELWOLD.

O Edwin! Edwin! when surviving Malice
Shall prey upon the fame of thy dead Master,
Wilt thou not some way strive to check the fiend's
Insatiate fury? Wilt thou see my name
Defil'd, and blacken'd with Detraction's venom,
And bear it patiently!

ELFRIDA.

What means my best —

ATHELWOLD.

Peace! not a word of best, or lov'd, or dear:
These are not titles now for thee to use,
Or me to triumph in. Virgins, retire;
We would awhile be private. Nay, return.
Concealment would be vain; and ye and Edwin
Are bound to me. Albina! as for you,
I sav'd your father when his blood was forfeit.

CHORUS.

Not I, great Earl, alone, but all this train
Are bound by ev'ry tie of faith and love
To gen'rous Athelwold; to that mild master,
Who never forc'd our service to one act,
But of such liberal sort as Freedom's self
Would smilingly perform.

ATHELWOLD.

It may be so,
But where's the tie, Elfrida, that may bind
Thy faith and love?

ELFRIDA.

The strongest sure, my Lord,
The golden, nuptial tie. Try but its strength.

ATHELWOLD.

I must perforce this instant. Know, Elfrida,
Once, on a day of high festivity,
The youthful King, encircled with his Nobles,
Crown'd high the sparkling bowl; and much of love,
Of beauty much the sprightly converse ran,
When, as it well might chance, the brisk Lord Ardulph
Made gallant note of Orgar's peerless daughter,
And in such phrase as might enflame a breast
More cool than Edgar's. Early on the morrow
Th' impatient Monarch gave me swift commission
To view those charms, of which Lord Ardulph's tongue
Had giv'n such warm description: to whose words,
If my impartial eye gave full assent,
I had his royal mandate on the instant
To hail you Queen of England.

ELFRIDA.

'Stead of which
You came, and hail'd me Wife of Athelwold.
Was this the tale I was so taught to fear?
Was this the deed, that known would make me fly

Thy clasping arm, as 'twere the pois'nous adder?
No, let this tender, fond embrace assure thee,
That thy Elfrida's love can never die;
Or, if it could, this animating touch
Would soon rewake it into life and rapture.

ATHELWOLD.

Dost thou then pardon me? Come, injur'd sovereign,
Plunge deep thy sword of justice in this breast,
And I will die contented.

ELFRIDA.

Heav'n forbid!
What can be done?

CHORUS.

Indeed, ye constant pair,
'Tis fit ye strive to fly the coming danger.
For safety now sits wav'ring on your love,
Like the light down upon the thistle's beard,
Which ev'ry breeze may part. Say, noble Earl,
What feint was us'd to lull the king's impatience?

ATHELWOLD.

Soon as these shades had veil'd my beauteous bride,
I hasted back to Edgar, laugh'd at Ardulph,
And talk'd of Elfrid, as of vulgar beauties;
Own'd no uncommon light'ning in her eye,
No breast that sham'd the snow, or cheek the rose.
The sprightly King believ'd me, and forgot her.

CHORUS.

But an alliance, great as Athelwold's,
With Orgar's daughter, soon would blaze abroad,
The theme of popular converse.

ATHELWOLD.

True, it would;
And for that reason, when I last was here,
The King was taught I went to wed Elfrida.

ELFRIDA.

How so, my Lord?

ATHELWOLD.

Thy Father, my Elfrida,
Has rich possessions: These, and these alone,
I made my theme of love; and told the King,
That tho' thy face (pardon the impious falshood)
Boasted not charms to grace a Monarch's throne,
Yet would thy dow'r well suit his minister.
I therefore meant to ask thee of thy father,
And (that my want of skill in choice might 'scape
All censure) hide thee close in Harewood castle.
Edgar with smiles consented, and, I think,
Harbours no thought of my disloyalty.

ELFRIDA.

If so, what danger now?

ATHELWOLD.

Ask'st thou, what danger?
'Sdeath, will that glance not instantly proclaim
My tenfold treachery?

ELFRIDA.

He shall not see me.
I'll hide me instant in some secret chamber,
And robe this virgin in my bridal vestments.

ATHELWOLD.

Thy love, like balm, runs trick'ling o'er the wounds
Of my torn bosom; yet 'tis vain, 'tis vain:
Thou must thyself appear, for Ardulph ever
Attends the king, and would detect the fraud.

ELFRIDA.

If so, yet still I can insure our safety;
For as you fear my softness of complexion,
I'll stain it with the juice of dusky leaves,
Or yellow berries, which this various wood
From tree or shrub will yield me. These I'll use,
And form a thousand methods to conceal
The little gleams of grace which Nature lent me.
Fear not my caution.

ATHELWOLD.

Gentlest, best of creatures,
Go, do then as thy tender care directs.
And yet how vain? What wond'rous art can steal
The liquid lightnings from those radiant eyes,
Or rob the wavy ringlets of that hair
Of all their nameless graces? Say it could,
Yet would that modest, but majestic mien,
That inborn dignity of soul, which breathes
Thro' each angelic gesture, still remain

To seize the heart of Edgar. Rest, Elfrida,
Rest as thou art, in all that blaze of beauty:
I must submit to my just lot, and lose thee.

ELFRIDA.

Away, my Lord, with these too anxious scruples:
Fear not my carriage; I will stoop my head,
Drawl out an idiot phrase, and do each act
With ev'n a rude and peasant aukwardness.

EDWIN.

Ere this, my Lord, I think, the King has reach'd
The full mid-way; 'twere fit you stood prepar'd
To give him meeting.

ATHELWOLD.

Give him meeting, Edwin!
Alas! I have no mask to veil my baseness.
When deep contrition shadows all my soul,
I cannot dress my features in light smiles,
And look the thing I am not. No, these eyes
Are not as yet true vassals to my purpose,
As yet indeed I am but half a villain.

ELFRIDA.

You weigh this matter in too nice a balance.
Your crime, my Lord, is but the crime of love:
Thousands like you have fail'd.

ATHELWOLD.

I know, Elfrida,
Could love absolve the crime, my soul were pure
As maiden innocence. Yes, I do love thee,

And thou art fair—beyond—But that's my bane;
Thy ev'ry charm adds weight to my offence,
And heaps fresh wrongs upon the best of Masters.
Yes, Elfrid, Edgar was the best of Masters.
O hide me from the thought in that dear bosom—
Heav'ns! I must die or keep her.

ELFRIDA.

Live, or die,
I'm thine alike. Death cannot aught abate,
Or life augment, my love. Let this embrace
Be witness of my truth.

ATHELWOLD.

It shall, it shall:
Thy ev'ry word and look declares thee faithful.
Secure of all thy love, and all thy prudence,
Returning confidence has arm'd my soul
For this dread meeting: resting on thy truth
I go— [*Exit Athelwold.*

ELFRIDA.

Go, and thy guardian saint preserve thee,
Show'r blessings vast as would my lavish love,
Had I his power to bless thee!

CHORUS.

Yes, my sisters,
The silent awe that reigns thro' all your train
Befits ye well. Let Admiration first
Pay her mute tribute. She can best express,
By those her kindling cheeks, and lifted eyes,
Where the tear twinkles, that transcendant praise
Elfrida's virtue claims.

ELFRIDA.

My virtue, Virgins,
Is only love. Or, say that it be virtue,
It owes its source to love, to chastest love,
Than which what passion more impels the mind
To fair and gen'rous action? But the hours
Are precious now. I'll to yon neighb'ring grove:
There grows an azure flow'r, I oft have mark'd it,
Which stains the pressing finger with a juice
Of dusky, yellow tinct: its name I know not.
I'll fetch and try it strait. Wait my return.
[*Exit Elfrida.*

CHORUS.

ODE.

Whence does this sudden lustre rise,
That gilds the grove? Not like the noontide beam,
Which sparkling dances on the trembling stream,
Nor the blue lightning's flash swift-shooting thro' the skies.
But such a solemn steady light,
As o'er the cloudless azure steals,
When Cynthia riding on the brow of night,
Stops in their mid career her silver wheels.

Whence can it rise, but from the sober pow'r
Of Constancy? She, heav'n-born Queen,
Descends, and here in Harewood's hallow'd bower,

Fixes her stedfast reign:
Stedfast, as when her high command
Gives to the starry band
Their radiant stations in heav'n's ample plain.
Stedfast, as when around this nether sphere,
She winds the various year.
Tells what time the snow-drop cold
Its maiden whiteness may unfold,
When the golden harvest bend,
When the ruddy fruits descend.
Then bids pale Winter wake, to pour
The pearly hail's translucent show'r,
To cast his silv'ry mantle o'er the woods,
And bind in crystal chains the slumb'ring floods.

The soul, which she inspires, has pow'r to climb
To all the heights sublime
Of Virtue's tow'ring hill.
That hill, at whose low foot weak-warbling strays
The scanty stream of human praise,
A shallow trickling rill.
While on the summits hov'ring Angels shed,
From their blest pinions, the nectareous dews
Of rich immortal Fame: from these the Muse
Oft steals some precious drops, and skilful blends
With those the lower fountain lends;
Then show'rs it all on some high-favour'd head.
But thou, Elfrida, claim'st the genuine dew;
Thy worth demands it all,
Pure, and unmixt, on thee the holy drops shall fall.

[*Elfrida returns with flowers.*

ELFRIDA, ORGAR, CHORUS.

ELFRIDA. [*looking on the flowers.*

'Tis strange, my Virgins, this sweet child of Summer,
Silken and soft, whose breath perfumes the air,
Whose gay vest paints the morn, should in its bosom
Hide such pollution? Yet 'tis often thus:
All are not as they seem.

ORGAR.

Yet hear me, Lady.

ELFRIDA.

Be gone, unmanner'd Stranger, nor pursue me;
Hence, from the grove. Know ye this Pilgrim, Virgins?
On my return I met him here.

CHORUS.

Alas!
We saw him here before, and heard his tale,
That mov'd our pity—But I fear me now,
'Twas false; some spy perchance, and may have heard—

ORGAR.

I have; yet not for that are you betray'd.
Fair Excellence, my heart is bound unto you,
I feel a tender interest in your welfare,
Tender as fathers feel.

ELFRIDA.

As fathers feel;
That well-known voice, and ah! that look—

ORGAR.

Elfrida!

ELFRIDA.

Yes it is him; it is my Father, Virgins.
Support me, or I faint! O wherefore, Sir?—

ORGAR.

Take courage, Daughter; my parental fondness
Prompted this visit. Thus I came disguis'd,
To learn the cause of my dear child's confinement:
And I have learnt it.

ELFRIDA.

Then all's lost for ever.

ORGAR.

Thou know'st, Elfrida, next my house's honour,
Thy peace has ever been my dearest care.
But such an insult—No: I cannot brook it.
So black a fraud! By all my ancestors,
By Belin's shade I will have ample vengeance.

ELFRIDA.

Alas, I know too well your dreadful purpose.
I knew it at the first. Yes, he must fall.
Yet pardon me, if my poor trembling heart
Puts up I know not what of pray'rs and vows
To ev'ry pitying saint. Celestial Guardians
Of nuptial Constancy! O bend from heav'n
Your star-crown'd heads, and hear a wretched woman,
That begs ye save, from a dread father's rage,
Her lord, her husband.

ORGAR.

Husband! 'Sdeath what husband?
Is Athelwold thy husband? Sooner call
Th' impeached thief true master of the booty
He stole, or murder'd for. Disdain the villain;
And help me to revenge thee.

CHORUS.

Think, great Earl;
What sanctimonious ties restrain your daughter.
Did she not swear before the hallow'd shrine
Eternal fealty to this her Lord?
Yet say, that he deceived her; shall her truth
Dare to revenge? No, Sir, in highest heav'n
Vengeance 'mid storms and tempests sits enshrin'd,
Vested in robes of lightning, and there sleeps,
Unwak'd but by th' incens'd Almighty's call.
Oh! let not Man presume to take unbid
That dread vicegerency.

ORGAR.

Peace, Virgins, peace.
Not ev'n the saws of Druids or of Bards
Have weight with me, when insults high as this
Rouse my just indignation. Hear me, Daughter,
You went to search for flow'rs, to blot your charms
With their dun hue. Yes, thou shalt search for flow'rs,
Yet shall they be the loveliest of the spring;
Flow'rs, that entangling in thine auburn hair,
Or blushing 'mid the whiteness of thy bosom,
May, to the power of every native grace,

Give double life and lustre. Haste, my child,
Array thyself in thy most gorgeous garb,
And see each jewel, which my love procur'd thee,
Dart its full radiance. More than all, put on
The nobler ornament of winning smiles,
And kind inviting glances.

ELFRIDA.

Never, never;
When this true heart renounces Athelwold,
May equitable heav'n—

ORGAR.

Away with vows;
And with a duteous, and attentive ear,
Listen to my persuasions. Much I wish
Persuasions might prevail, that not compell'd
To use a father's just prerogative,
My will may meet with thy unforc'd obedience.
Follow me, on thy duty.

ELFRIDA.

Cruel Father,
That duty shall obey you; I will follow:
Yet dread as is that frown, dreadful as death,
It shall not shake the tenor of my faith;
Living or dead I still am Athelwold's.

[*Exeunt Orgar and Elfrida.*

SEMICHORUS.

Horror! Horror!
The pen of Fate, dipt in its deepest gall,

Perhaps on that ill-omen'd wall,
Now writes th' event of this tremendous day.
O! that our weaker sight
Could read the mystic characters, and spy
What to the unpurg'd, mortal eye,
Is hid in endless night.

SEMICHORUS.

Suspense! thou frozen guest, be gone.
The wretch, whose rugged bed
Is spread on thorns, more softly rests his head,
Than he that sinks amid the cygnet's down,
If thou, tormenting fiend, be nigh,
To prompt his starting tear, his ceaseless sigh,
His wish, his prayer, his vow for ling'ring certainty.

CHORUS.

But hark! that certainty arrives. Methought
I heard the winding horn. I did not err;
The King is near at hand. This quick approach
Will sure prevent this proud Earl's cruel purpose.
Yet what of that? Does her fair form require
The blazon of rich vesture? Genuine beauty
Nor asks, nor needs it: negligence alone
Is its bright diadem, and artless ease
Its robe of Tyrian tincture. Say, my Sisters,
Shall we salute this monarch with a hymn
Of Festival and Joy! Alas, such joy
Ill suits our trembling hearts, and weeping eyes.
And now 'twere vain; for see, the King approaches.

EDGAR, ATHELWOLD, CHORUS.

EDGAR.

No, Athelwold; not from a partial blindness,
Or for the mode and guise of courtesy,
Are we thus large in praise; in our true judgment,
This Castle is not more kind Nature's debtor
For its delicious site, than 'tis to thee
For this so goodly structure. From its base,
Ev'n to yon turrets trim, and taper spires,
All is of choicest masonry. Each part
Doth boast a separate grace; but ornament,
Tho' here the richest that the eye can note,
Is us'd, not lavish'd; Art seems generous here,
Yet not a prodigal. But ah! my Earl, [*seeing the Chorus.*
What living charms are here? Thy castle's beauty
Must not detain me from this lovelier prospect.
Your pardon, fair Ones, that my wayward eye
Paid not at first, where first was surely due,
Its homage to your graces.

ATHELWOLD.

Heav'ns! they weep.
What may this mean? Some dread and unseen chance
Has counter-work'd my safety.

EDGAR.

Whence this silence;
Why are your lovely heads thus bow'd with sadness?
Beshrew my heart, my Lord, but this is strange.

I know thee, Earl, and know thy gentleness,
More prone t'obey, than lord it o'er the sex;
Else should I guess this sorrow had its rise
From some discourteous treatment.

CHORUS.

No, dread Sov'reign;
He is the noblest, gentlest, best of masters;
And may your love reward——

ORGAR, ATHELWOLD, EDGAR, CHORUS.

ATHELWOLD.

Death to my hopes!

ORGAR.

Yes, Villain, start; but let this vengeful arm
Arrest thy baseness; would to heav'n its strength,
Thus grasping thee, could open thy false breast,
And bare thy heart to the sham'd eye of day.

EDGAR.

Patience, hot man. What art thou?

ORGAR.

Earl of Devon!
Pardon me, Prince; that this my honest rage
O'erleaps obedient duty. I am wrong'd,
Yet that's but small; for know, much injur'd Prince,
Thy wrongs as well as mine both call for justice.
Yes, Sir, I here, on a true subject's oath,
Proclaim Earl Athelwold a faithless traiter.

EDGAR.

Ha! what is this? Renounce the word, old Earl;
Thy length of years hath forc'd thee, sure, to press
The verge of dotage. Athelwold! what Athelwold
A faithless traitor! Perish the suspicion.
Never before did word, or thought, or look,
Give doubt of his distinguish'd loyalty.
Dotage alone could frame the accusation.

ORGAR.

I do not dote, thank Heav'n, my faculties
Are yet my own, unblemish'd and unhurt.
Would so my Daughter were!

EDGAR.

What is his drift?

ATHELWOLD.

Better, my royal Lord, you mark'd him not;
The wayward Earl is ——.

ORGAR.

What, audacious Villain!
I will be heard.

EDGAR.

Go too, thou choleric Lord.

ORGAR.

When thou hast heard me, Edgar, call me choleric.

EDGAR.

Speak then, and briefly.

ORGAR.

Once, my sacred Liege,
I had a daughter, duteous as e'er crown'd
A father's wish, and lovely as could warm
A youth to am'rous transports. This, my Lord,
You learnt long since from noble Ardulph's praises,
And fir'd with his description, sent this Earl,
This faithful Earl, t' invite her to our throne.

EDGAR.

No, Orgar, not t' invite her to our throne,
Simply to note her beauty was his errand.

ORGAR.

Yes, he did note it, stampt it for his own.
But why this parley? Enter, Sir, these gates,
And let Elfrida's features be the book,
Where you may read the story of his falshood,
Ev'n on the instant.

EDGAR.

Noble Lord, lead on.
We'll follow to the trial. I will humour
The Earl's hot temper. He has heard, my friend,
We meant t' exalt his daughter, and for that
His partial fondness, link'd with his ambition,
Levels this rage at thee. Attend us, Lords.

[*Exeunt Edgar, Orgar, &c.*

CHORUS, ATHELWOLD.

CHORUS.

My Lord, the King is enter'd: stand not thus
In mute and fixt distress.

ATHELWOLD.

Away, away;
What! can a man that thinks such thoughts as I do
Have pow'r of word or motion? speak to me;
Inform me all. What said she, when I left her?
How came her Father hither? how did she
Greet his arrival? Say, was she compell'd,
Or did her free, and voluntary voice,
Tell all the story? Did she marshal him,
To this his deed of vengeance?

CHORUS.

Dearest Master;
Elfrida told him not: his own deceit
Was his informer. Here the Earl arriv'd
Early at morn, in mean and pilgrim weeds,
All like an ancient, toil-worn traveller;
And with a tale told in such piteous strain,
Fraught with such sad and moving circumstance,
With woes so well dissembled, that our softness
Suffered him to enter this close bow'r for rest,
Which he adapting to his prying purpose,
Thence learnt the secret. This our disobedience,
We own—

ATHELWOLD.

Was my perdition. Yet 'tis well;
I blame ye not; it was Heav'n's justice, Virgins;
This brought him hither; this annull'd your faith.
I do not think, you purpos'd my destruction;
But yet you have destroy'd me. O Elfrida,
And art thou faithful? This my jealous eye
Thought it had mark'd some speck of change upon thee;
Thought it had found, what might have made thy loss
Somewhat within endurance. 'Tis not so;
And this thy purity but serves t' augment
The sum of my distractions. Meet me, Edgar,
With thy rais'd sword; be merciful and sudden.—
[*Exit Athelwold.*

CHORUS.

ODE.

Say, will no white-rob'd Son of Light,
Swift-darting from his heav'nly height,
Here deign to take his hallow'd stand;
Here wave his amber locks; unfold
His pinions cloth'd with downy gold;
Here smiling stretch his tutelary wand?
And you, ye host of Saints, for ye have known
Each dreary path in Life's perplexing maze,
Tho' now ye circle yon eternal throne
With harpings high of inexpressive praise,
Will not your train descend in radiant state,
To break with Mercy's beam this gathering cloud of Fate?

'Tis silence all. No son of light
Darts swiftly from his heav'nly height;
No train of radiant saints descend.
" Mortals, in vain ye hope to find,
" If guilt, if fraud, has stain'd your mind,
" Or Saint to hear, or Angel to defend."

So Truth proclaims. I hear the sacred sound
Burst from the centre of her burning throne:
Where aye she sits with star-wreath'd lustre crown'd:
A bright Sun clasps her adamantine zone.
So Truth proclaims: her awful voice I hear:
With many a solemn pause it slowly meets my ear.

" Attend, ye Sons of Men; attend, and say,"
Does not enough of my refulgent ray
Break thro' the veil of your mortality!
Say, does not reason in this form descry
Unnumber'd, nameless glories, that surpass
The Angel's floating pomp, the Seraph's glowing grace?

Shall then your earth-born daughters vie
With me? Shall she, whose brightest eye
But emulates the diamond's blaze,
Whose cheek but mocks the peaches bloom,
Whose breath the hyacinth's perfume,
Whose melting voice the warbling woodlark's lays,
Shall she be deem'd my rival? Shall a form
Of elemental dross, of mould'ring clay,

Vie with these charms imperial? The poor
worm
Shall prove her contest vain. Life's little day
Shall pass, and she is gone: while I appear
Flush'd with the bloom of youth thro' Heav'n's
eternal year.

Know, Mortals, know, ere first ye sprung,
Ere first these orbs in æther hung,
I shone amid the heav'nly throng.
These eyes beheld Creation's day,
This voice began the choral lay,
And taught Archangels their triumphant song.
Pleas'd I survey'd bright Nature's gradual
birth,
Saw infant Light with kindling lustre spread,
Soft vernal fragrance clothe the flow'ring
earth,
And Ocean heave on his extended bed;
Saw the tall pine aspiring pierce the sky,
The tawny Lion stalk, the rapid Eagle fly.

Last, Man arose, erect in youthful grace,
Heav'n's hallow'd image stampt upon his
face,
And, as he rose, the high behest was giv'n,
"That I alone of all the host of heav'n,
"Should reign Protectress of the godlike
Youth."
Thus the Almighty spake: he spake and call'd
me Truth.

ATHELWOLD, EDWIN, CHORUS.

ATHELWOLD.

Banish me! No. I'll die. For why should life
Remain a lonely lodger in that breast
Which Honour leaves deserted? Idle breath!
Thou can'st not fill such vacancy. Be gone.
This sword shall free——.

CHORUS.

O shame to Fortitude!
Shame to that manly passion, which inspires
Its vigorous warmth, when the bleak blasts of Fate
Would chill the soul. O call the ready virtue
Quick to thy aid, for she is ever near thee;
Is ever prompt to spread her sevenfold shield
O'er noble breasts.

ATHELWOLD.

And but o'er noble breasts;
Not o'er the breast which livid Infamy
Indelibly has spotted. O shame, shame.
Sword, rid me of the thought.

CHORUS.

Forbear, forbear;
Think what a sea of deep perdition whelms
The wretch's trembling soul, who launches forth
Unlicens'd to Eternity. Think, think;
And let the thought restrain thy impious hand.
The race of Man is one vast marshall'd army,
Summon'd to pass the spacious realms of Time,
Their leader the Almighty. In that march

Ah! who may quit his post? when high in air
The chos'n Archangel rides, whose right hand wields
Th' imperial standard of heav'n's providence,
Which, dreadly sweeping thro' the vaulted sky,
O'ershadows all creation.

ATHELWOLD.

I was once——
Yes, I was once (I have his royal word for't)
A man of such try'd faith, such steady honour,
As mock'd all doubt and scruple.—What a change!
Now must that unstain'd virgin character,
Be doom'd to gross and hourly prostitution,
Sating the lust of slander; and my wife,
My chaste Elfrida! O distraction, no,
I'll fly to save her.

EDWIN.

Stay, my dearest Master;
You rush on instant death.

ATHELWOLD.

I mean it, slave!
And would'st thou hinder me?

EDWIN.

Yes, Sir, I hold
'Tis duty to my King, and love to you,
Thus to oppose your entrance.

ATHELWOLD.

What, thou traitor!
Thy pardon, Edwin, I forgot myself;

Forgot, that I stood here a banish'd man;
And that this gate was shut against its master.
And yet this gate leads to my dear Elfrida;
Can it be barr'd to me? O Earth, cold Earth,
Upon whose breast I cast this load of mis'ry,
Bear it awhile; and you, ye aged Oaks,
Ye venerable fathers of this wood,
Who oft have cool'd beneath your arching shades
My humble ancestors, oft seen them hie
To your spread umbrage, from yon sultry field,
Their scene of honest labour, shade, ah! shade,
The last, the wretchedest of all their race.
I will not long pollute ye; for I mean
To pay beneath your consecrated gloom
A sacrifice to honour, and the ghosts
Of those progenitors, who sternly frown
On me their base descendant.

EDWIN.

See, ye Virgins,
How Horror shades his brow; how fixt his eye;
Heav'ns! what despair—

CHORUS.

Edwin, 'tis ever thus
With noble minds, if chance they slide to folly;
Remorse stings deeper, and relentless Conscience
Pours more of gall into the bitter cup
Of their severe repentance.

ATHELWOLD.

'Tis resolv'd:
I'll enter and demand a second audience.
And yet how vain! Ere I can reach his ear,

'is ready train will stop me, and, with all
he cruel punctuality of office,
) prompt to act 'gainst fallen favorites,
lismiss me with reproof.——Surely I heard her.
Vas't not Elfrida's voice? 'Tis she herself!

ELFRIDA, EDGAR, ATHELWOLD, ORGAR, CHORUS.

ELFRIDA.

'o, I will once more clasp him to my bosom.
will not be withheld. I will o'ertake him,
Vill go with him to exile. Ha, my Husband!
) quickly found! They thought to tear me from thee;
ut we will part no more.

EDGAR.

Take heed, Elfrida,
his ill-tim'd fondness may recall the fate
just now freed him from; who loves like me
an ill brook this. Or quit him, or he dies.

ATHELWOLD.

es, let me die! Death is my dearest wish.
nit me, Elfrida! leave me to my fate.
'is just, 'tis just. Thus to my sov'reign's sword
eely I bare my breast. Strike, injur'd Prince!
ıt do not banish me.

ELFRIDA.

What, Athelwold,
then the life, on whose dear preservation
lfrida's peace depends, not worth the saving?

Die then. But ere thy murd'rer strikes the stroke,
Let me inform him, that his act destroys
No single life.

EDGAR.

By heav'n, she loves the traitor
Beyond all hope of change ——

ELFRIDA.

No, Athelwold,
Thou shalt not die. That pause in royal Edgar
Bespeaks forgiveness. He will soon relent;
And mercy, flowing from his gracious tongue,
Seal thy full pardon. Let us kneel, my Lord;
Seize the important moment; kneel together;
And, as these streaming eyes and lifted hands
Employ each act of silent supplication,
Do thou recount—Ah! no, thy modest tongue
Could never tell ev'n half the gallant story.
Be silent then. Let Edgar's self reflect;
For well I know his mem'ry writes thy virtues
Upon its fairest page. Yes, let him weigh
All thy past deeds of loyalty and faith,
'Gainst this so light a fault.

EDGAR.

So light a fault!
Had he dislodg'd my richest coffer'd treasures,
Dispers'd sedition's poison 'mid my troops,
Or aim'd with daring and rebellious hand
To snatch these regal honours from my brow,
I sooner could have pardon'd.

ATHELWOLD.

Cease, Elfrida.
My doom is just—Yes, royal Sir, I go
To banishment. I do deserve to breathe,
Deserve to bear this load of life about me,
For many years; to lengthen out my age,
List'ning the hourly knell of curst remembrance,
Whose leaden stroke shall tell to my sad soul
That I was faithful once.

ELFRIDA.

O flinty Edgar,
What! will this penitence not move thee? Know
There is a rose-lip'd Seraph sits on high,
Who ever bends his holy ear to earth
To mark the voice of Penitence, to catch
Her solemn sighs, to tune them to his harp,
And echo them in harmonies divine
Up to the throne of Grace. Ev'n Heav'n is won
By Penitence, and shall Heav'n's substitute,
Shall Edgar scorn——

EDGAR.

Cease, cease, thou beauteous pleader!
Ah far too beauteous! Wouldst thou gain thy suit,
Why glows that vermil lip? why rolls that eye
Bright as the ray of morn? Why in each gesture
Such inexpressive graces, but because
They're native all, and will not be conceal'd?
Else sure each charm betrays him, and becomes
An advocate, whose silent eloquence

Pleads 'gainst thy voice, and foils its tuneful power.
Traitor! was this the face which thy false tongue
Profan'd as vulgar? This such common beauty
As the fair eye of day beheld each hour
In ev'ry clime he lighted? Base dissembler!
This instant quit our realm.

ELFRIDA.

O stay thee, Edgar,
And once more hear me. At thy feet I fall
As earnest, and distrest a supplicant,
As e'er embrac'd the knees of Majesty.
O spare thy Country's guardian, Edgar, spare
Thy closest, surest friend. Let not one fault,
Cancel his thousand, thousand acts of faith.
Alas! I fall to vainest repetition.
Grief, whelming grief, drowns all my faculties,
And leaves me nought but tears.

EDGAR.

Rise, rise, Elfrida.

ELFRIDA.

Shall he then live?

EDGAR.

He shall, he shall, my fair.
If so he quit the realm within the space
Our sentence limited.

ELFRIDA.

O stop not there;
That sentence will be death to Athelwold.
Think, for thou know'st full well his gentle na
ture.

Can he support the rigor of this doom?
Can he, who liv'd but in thy gracious smiles,
Who'd pine, if chance those smiles a single hour
Were dealt him thriftily; think, can he bear
The infamy of exile?

EDGAR.

Hear me, Athelwold,
Did I not show'r on thy much-favour'd head
My thickest honours, and with gift so ready
As out-run all request? Did I not hold thee
Still in such open confidence of friendship,
Such love as ——

ATHELWOLD.

Sooner stab me, than repeat it.

EDGAR.

Yet give me hearing. I repeat not this
To taunt or gall thee. On my soul thy worth
Did o'ertop all those honours, and thy zeal
Kept pace with my best love. Nor till this deed—
But such a deed! look there, look on that face.
Thou know'st me, Athelwold, has seen me gaze
On a soft yielding fair one, till mine eye
Shot flames. Perdition seize me, if this heart
Knew love till now.

ATHELWOLD.

I see it plain, my Liege,
Nor say I aught to lessen my offence.
No, here I kneel, Oh! cast but on my mis'ry
One kind forgiving glance; this ready sword
Shall expiate all.

ELFRIDA.

Ah! will you? must he die?

EDGAR.

No, stay thee, Athelwold, and sheath thy sword;
I never yet (save but this hour of rage)
Deem'd thee my subject. Thou wert still my friend;
And, injur'd as I am, thou still art such:
I do forego the word; to banish thee
Or seal thy death, transcends a friend's just right.

ELFRIDA.

Ah generous deed! ah godlike goodness! Virgins,
The king will pardon him. Wake each high note
Of praise, and gratitude, teach Edgar's name
To Harewood's furthest echo. O my Sov'reign!
What words can speak my thanks—

EDGAR.

Nay, check these transports,
Lest, if I see thee thus, my soul forget
Its milder purpose. I will leave thee, lady;
Yet first my lips must press this gentle hand,
And breathe one soft sigh of no common fervor.
Now on, my Lords—Fair wonder of thy sex,
Adieu. We'll straight unto our realm of Mercia.
Yet first, as was our purpose, thro' this forest
We'll chace the nimble Roebuck; may the sport
More please us than we hope. Earl Athelwold,
Thou too must join our train. Follow us straight.

[*Exit Edgar, &c.*

ATHELWOLD.

I do, my Liege. Elfrida, I have much
For thy lov'd ear, and have but one farewel
To tell it all—And yet——

ELFRIDA.

Ah! loiter not,
It may enrage. Farewel, be sure, take heed
I come not in your talk; avoid ev'n thinking;
Check ev'n the sighs of absence. Haste, my Earl,
Oh haste thee, as thou lov'st thy constant wife.
[*Exit Athelwold.*

ORGAR, ELFRIDA, CHORUS.

ORGAR.

Thy constant wife! ah, stain of all thy race,
Degen'rate girl! Henceforth be Orgar deem'd
Of soft, and dove-like temper, who could see
A child of his stoop to such vile abasement,
And yet forbore just wrath; forbore to draw
That blood she had defil'd from her mean veins.
But sure thou art not mine; some Elf or Fay
Did spirit away my babe, and by curst charms
Thee in her cradle plac'd. Nay, hang not on me.
Dry, dry thy tears, they've done their office amply.
Edgar has pardon'd him. No, by my Earldom,
I cannot think of majesty thus meanly.
He'll yet avenge it: What if chance he should not?
That stops not me; I have a heart, an arm,
A sword can do me justice.

ELFRIDA.

Ah! my Lord,
Are you still merciless? Alas, I hop'd——

ORGAR.

What could'st thou hope, Elfrida? could'st thou
think
I e'er would pardon his vile perfidy,
Or thine ignoble softness?

ELFRIDA.

Dearest father,
Frown not thus sternly on me. I would fain
Touch your relenting soul, fain win your heart
To fatherly forgiveness. For thro' life
I've oft had pleasing proof how that forgiveness
Stoop'd to my fond persuasion. But I fear
Persuasion now has left me. My sad thoughts
Are all on wing, all following Athelwold,
Like unseen ministring spirits:—Pardon, Sir,
That frown shall check me, I'll not mention him;
I will but plead for my own weakness, plead
For that soft sympathy of soul, which you
Deem base and servile. Base perhaps it might be,
Were I of bolder sex. But I, alas!——
Ah pardon me, if Nature stampt me woman;
Gave me a heart soft, gentle, prone to pity,
And very fearful. Fearful, sure with cause
At this dread hour, when if one hapless word,
One sigh break forth unbid, it may rekindle
The Monarch's rage—What has my frenzy said?

I've wander'd from my meaning. Dearest Virgins,
My rash tongue more inflames him. O assist me,
Ye are not thus opprest with inward horror;
Kneel, plead, persuade, convince——

CHORUS.

Alas, my mistress,
What may a servant's accents do t'appease
This furious Earl?

ORGAR.

Ye well may spare them: Maidens,
Know my firm soul's resolv'd, and be my heart
As base as Athelwold's if it foregoes
The honest resolution. Think what I,
What Britain suffers from this traitor's fraud:
Had Edgar took my daughter to his bed,
Our British line, which now is doom'd to sink
In vile subjection, had again assum'd
The pall of royalty, with half its power,
In time perchance the whole. But this false Saxon
Shall with his life repay me. Here I'll wait
His first return, and in his own domain
Give him fair combat. I have known the time
When this good arm had hardihood enough
For thrice his prowess. What is lost thro' age,
My just cause shall supply; and he shall fall
As did the traitor Oswald, whose bold tongue
Defam'd me to King Athelstan: To the ground
My sharp lance nail'd the caitiff.

[*Exit Orgar.*

ELFRIDA, CHORUS.

ELFRIDA.

Think, my Lord,
Will Athelwold, will he enter those lists,
Where conquest would be parricide? Alas,
He hears me not. Go, thou obdurate man,
A daughter's tears will but the more provoke thee.
I will not follow him. No, poor Elfrida!
All thou canst do is here to stand, and weep,
And feel that thou art wretched.

CHORUS.

Dearest Mistress,
Restrain this flood of tears, perhaps——

ELFRIDA.

Perhaps!
Ah! mock me not with hopes.

CHORUS.

We do not mean it:
For Hope, tho' 'tis pale Sorrow's only cordial,
Has yet a dull and opiate quality,
Enfeebling what it lulls. It suits not you;
For, as we fear ——

ELFRIDA.

Do you too fear? Alas!
I flatter'd my poor soul that all its fears
Were Grief's distemper'd coinage, that my love
Rais'd causeless apprehensions, and at length
Edgar would quite forgive. I do bethink me,

My joy broke forth too rashly. When they left us,
His safety was not half secur'd; my pleading
Was not half heard; I should have follow'd Edgar,
Claim'd more full pardon, forc'd him to embrace
My sorrowing Lord.

CHORUS.

We fear that sorrow more
Than Edgar's rage. We fear his fallen virtue.
Self-condemnation works most strongly on him,
Ev'n to despondency. Ev'n at his pardon,
No joy flush'd on his cheek; we mark'd him well,
He shew'd no sign of welcome. No, he took it
As who should say, "To give me aught but death
"Is a poor boon unwish'd and unaccepted."
Too much we fear he'll do some impious act—

ELFRIDA.

What, on his life? I thought I had explor'd
Each various face of danger: this escap'd me.
How miss'd I this? It suits his courage highly;
Suits too his fix'd remorse.—But yet he will not,
No, Athelwold, thou wilt not kill Elfrida!

CHORUS.

O may his love preserve him: may these shades
Receive him soon in peace. To this blest end
You sure should strive to calm your father's rage;
At least not suffer him, as now, retir'd
To brood o'er his revenge. For know, Elfrida,
Beneath the silent gloom of solitude
Tho' Peace can sit and smile; tho' meek Content
Can keep the cheerful tenor of her soul,

Ev'n in the loneliest shades; yet let not Wrath
Approach, let black Revenge keep far aloof,
Or soon they flame to madness.

ELFRIDA.

True, my Virgins;
Attend me then: I'll try each winning art:
Tho' ill such art becomes me, yet I'll aim it.—
Hark—whence that noise? I heard some hasty footsteps.

CHORUS.

O Heav'ns! 'tis Edwin.

ELFRIDA, EDWIN, CHORUS.

ELFRIDA.

Edwin, ah! that look
Bespeaks too well the horror of thy errand.
Tell it me all.

EDWIN.

Alas!——

ELFRIDA.

Nay, do not pause.
Tell it me all. I think it will not kill me.
Repeat each circumstance. I'm ready, Edwin,
Ev'n for the worst.

EDWIN.

Then hear that worst, Elfrida.
Soon as the stag had left yon westward thicket,
The King dismiss'd his Lords, each sev'ral ways
To their best sport, bidding Earl Athelwold,

Lord Ardulph, and myself, attend his person.
Thus parted from the rest, the Monarch pierc'd
A darkling dell, which open'd in a lawn
Thick set with elm around. Suddenly here
He turn'd his steed, and cry'd, "This place befits
"Our purpose well."

ELFRIDA.

Purpose! what purpose, Edwin?
'Twas predetermin'd then, dissembling tyrant!
How could I trust, or hope——

EDWIN.

Yet give me hearing:
Thus with a grave composure, and calm eye,
King Edgar spake. Now hear me, Athelwold;
Thy King has pardon'd this thy trait'rous act:
From all disloyal baseness to thy prince
Thou stand'st absolv'd; yet, know there still remains
Somewhat to cancel more. As man to man,
As friend to friend, now, Athelwold, I call thee
Straight to defend thy life with thy good sword.
Nay, answer not; defend it gallantly.
If thy arm prosper, this my dying tongue
Shall pardon thee, and bless thee. If thou fall'st,
Thy parting breath must to my right resign
Elfrida's beauties. At the word, both drew,
Both fought; but Athelwold was ill-play'd passion.
He aim'd his falchion at the Monarch's head,
Only to leave his own brave breast defenceless.
And on the instant Edgar's rapid sword
Pierc'd my dear master's heart. He fell to earth,

And, falling, cry'd, " This wound atones for all.
" Edgar, thus full aveng'd, will pardon me;
" And my true wife with chaste, connubial tears,
" Embalm my memory." He smil'd, and dy'd.

ELFRIDA.

Nay, come not round me, Virgins, nor support me.
I do not swoon, nor weep. I call not heav'n
T'avenge my wretchedness. I do not wish
This tyrant's hand may wither with cold palsies.
No, I am very patient. Heav'n is just!
And, when the measure of his crimes is full,
Will bare its red right arm, and lance its lightnings.
Till then, ye elements, rest: and thou, firm earth,
Ope not thy yawning jaws, but let this monster
Stalk his due time on thine affrighted surface.
Yes; let him still go on; still execute
His savage purposes, and daily make
More widows weep, as I do. Foolish eyes!
Why flow ye thus unbidden! What have tears
To do with grief like mine?

CHORUS.

Help, help, my sisters,
To bear her to the castle.

ORGAR, ELFRIDA, EDWIN, CHORUS.

ORGAR.

As I past,
Methought I heard a sound of loud lament;
Elfrida, ah!

ELFRIDA.

Is not my father there?
Withhold me not; I'll fall at his dear feet.
O Sir! behold your child thus lowly prostrate;
Avenge her wrongs, avenge your poor Elfrida,
Your helpless, widow'd daughter.

ORGAR.

Widow'd daughter!
What, is he slain?

ELFRIDA.

Inhospitably butcher'd;
The tyrant's savage self—Stand you thus cool?
Where is the British spirit, where the fire
Of Belin's race?——O foolishness of grief!
Alas, I had forgot; had Edgar spar'd him,
That sword, to which my madness call'd for vengeance,
Ere long was meant to do the bloody deed,
And make the murder parricide. Have I
No friend to do me right?

ORGAR.

Thou hast, my child;
I am thy friend, thy father. Trust my care.
Edwin, a word. Retire, my dearest daughter;
Virgins, conduct her in.

ELFRIDA.

My father, no.
What do you do? I must not be withheld.

I'll to yon bloody grove, and clasp my husband,
My murder'd husband. Why restrain me, Sir?
Can my sad eye dart fire thro' his cold breast,
And light up life anew?

ORGAR.

Go in, my child,
And seek tranquillity.

ELFRIDA.

Tranquillity!
I know her well; she is Death's pale-ey'd sister;
She's now in yonder grove closing the lids
Of my poor Athelwold. That office done,
She'll bear his soul upon her gentle plumes
Up to the realms of joy. I'll follow them:
I know he'd have it so: he'll not be blest,
Ev'n on his throne of bliss, till I am with him.

CHORUS.

This way, my dearest Mistress.

ELFRIDA.

Hold, nay hold;
Crowd not around me. Let me pause awhile.
Albina, thou alone shalt join my mis'ry;
I've much to utter to thy friendly ear.
Lead on, thou gentle maid; thy single arm
Shall prop my trembling frame; thy single voice
Speak peace to my afflictions.

[*Exit with the principal Virgin.*

ORGAR, EDWIN, SEMICHORUS.

ORGAR.

On your lives,
Virgins, let no disturbing step approach her.
Say, Edwin (for I guess 'twas you that brought
These tidings hither) where was royal Edgar,
When late you left him?

EDWIN.

At my master's side
Repentant of the stroke.

ORGAR.

Comes he not back
To Harewood?

SEMICHORUS.

Heav'n forbid! Elfrida's brain
Would madden at the sight.

ORGAR.

Mistake not, Virgins;
I did not mean at this distressful hour
The King should see my daughter.

SEMICHORUS.

No, for pity,
Do not profane this sabbath of her grief.
O be her sorrow sacred!

ORGAR.

Fear not, Virgins;
Her peace is my best care, and, to ensure it,
I'll haste this instant, by young Edwin's guidance,

To find the Monarch. Some four miles fron Harewood
Stands old Egbert's castle, my fast friend.
With him will I persuade the King to sojourn,
Till my child's grief abate; that too to speed
Be it your business, Virgins. Watching ever
Each happy interval, when your soft tongues
May hint his praises, till by practice won
She bear their fuller blazon. Elfrida's welfare
Requires this friendly office at your hands;
And Edgar's virtues bear such genuine lustre,
That truth itself directs—— [*Exit Orgar*

SEMICHORUS.

As truth directs,
So only shall we act. This day has shewn
What dire effects await its violation.
Straight is the road of truth, and plain;
And, tho' across the sacred way
Ten thousand erring footsteps stray,
'Tis ours to walk direct,
And, with sage caution circumspect,
Pace slowly through the solemn scene.
[*The principal Virgin return*

SEMICHORUS.

Has Orgar left the grove?

SEMICHORUS.

He has, my sister.

SEMICHORUS.

Then hear, and aid Elfrida's last resolve,
Who takes the only way stern Fate has left

To save her plighted faith for ever pure
To her dead Athelwold.

SEMICHORUS.

Forbid it, Patience;
Forbid it, that submissive calm of soul,
Which teaches meek-ey'd Piety to smile
Beneath the scourge of Heav'n.

SEMICHORUS.

Ye need not fear it,
She means not self-destruction. Thanks to heav'n,
Huge and o'erbearing as her mis'ry is,
It cannot so oblit'rate from her breast
The written rule of duty. Her pure soul
Means, on the instant, to devote itself
To heav'n and holiness. Assist her straight,
Lest Edgar's presence, and her father's rage
Prevent the blest intention. See, she comes.
Kneel on each side, devoutly kneel around her;
And breathe some pray'r in high and solemn strains,
That angels from their thrones of light may hear,
And ratify her vow.

ELFRIDA, CHORUS.

[*Elfrida kneels, and the Virgins divide into two Troops.*]

SEMICHORUS.

Hear, Angels, hear,
Hear from these nether thrones of light;
And O! in golden characters record
Each firm, immutable, immortal word.

Then wing your solemn flight
Up to the heav'n of heav'ns, and there
Hang the conspicuous tablet high,
'Mid the dread records of eternity.

ELFRIDA.

Hear first, that Athelwold's sad widow swears
To rear a hallow'd convent o'er the place
Where stream'd his blood: there will she weep thro' life,
Immur'd with this chaste throng of Virgins; there
Each day shall six times hear her full-voic'd choir
Chant the slow requiem o'er her martyr'd lord;
There too, when midnight low'rs with awful gloom,
She'll rise, observant of the stated call
Of waking grief, bear the dim livid taper
Along the winding isles, and at the altar
Kiss ev'ry pale shrine with her trembling lips,
Press the cold stone with her bent knee, and call
On sainted Athelwold.

SEMICHORUS.

Hear, Angels, hear,
Hear from these nether thrones of light;
And O! in golden characters record
Each firm, immutable, immortal word.
Then wing your solemn flight
Up to the heav'n of heav'ns, and there
Hang the conspicuous tablet high,
'Mid the dread records of eternity.

ELFRIDA.

Hear next, that Athelwold's sad widow swears
Never to violate the holy vow
She to his truth first plighted; swears to bear
The sober singleness of widowhood
To her cold grave. If from this chaste resolve
She ev'n in thought should swerve; if gaudy pomp,
Or flatt'ring greatness e'er should tempt one wish
To stray beyond this purpose; may that heav'n,
Which hears this vow, punish its violation,
As heav'nly justice ought.

CHORUS.

Hear, Angels, hear,
Hear from these nether thrones of light;
And O! in golden characters record
Each firm, immutable, immortal word.
Then wing your solemn flight
Up to the heav'n of heav'ns, and there
Hang the conspicuous tablet high,
'Mid the dread records of eternity.

CARACTACUS.

WRITTEN ON THE MODEL OF

THE ANCIENT GREEK TRAGEDY.

First published in the Year 1759.

THE ARGUMENT.

CARACTACUS, King of the Silures, having been defeated by OSTORIUS, the Roman Præfect, his Queen taken prisoner, and his son (as it is supposed) either slain or fled, retired with his only daughter, and took sanctuary amongst the DRUIDS in Mona. OSTORIUS, after the battle, leaving garrisons in the conquered country, marched to subdue the northern part of Britain, and led his troops to the frontiers of the Brigantes, then governed by CARTISMANDUA. This Queen, dreading the victorious enemy, made a truce with him; one of the conditions of which was, that she should assist the Romans in securing the British King, that he might be carried to Rome to grace the triumph of Claudius. She accordingly gave up her two sons as hostages, to be sent themselves to Rome, in case they did not seduce CARACTACUS from his sanctuary, to which place they were to be accompanied by AULUS DIDIUS, and a sufficient force, to effect that design.

The Drama opens on their arrival in the consecrated grove, a little before midnight, and about the time when the DRUIDS, who form the CHORUS, were preparing the ceremonial of CARACTACUS's admission into their order. The two princes are seized as spies, and the incidents, consequent upon this, form what is called the EPISODE of the piece. The EXODE, or CATASTROPHE, is prepared by the coming of ARVIRAGUS the King's son, who, having escaped with life in the late battle, had employed the intermediate time in privately collecting his father's scattered forces, to put him again in a condition of facing the enemy: His bravery, in defending his father and the DRUIDS, occasions the PERIPETIA, or change of fortune; and his death, with the final captivity of CARACTACUS, concludes the Tragedy.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

AULUS DIDIUS, the Roman General.

VELLINUS, ELIDURUS } Sons of CARTISMANDUA.

*CHORUS of DRUIDS and BARDS.

CARACTACUS.

EVELINA, Daughter to CARACTACUS.

ARVIRAGUS, Son to CARACTACUS.

SCENE, MONA.

* The Dramatic part of the Chorus is supposed to be chiefly spoken by the principal Druid; the Lyrical part sung by the Bards.

CARACTACUS.

A

DRAMATIC POEM.

AULUS DIDIUS, *with Romans.*

THIS is the secret centre of the isle:
Here, Romans, pause, and let the eye of wonder
Gaze on the solemn scene; behold yon oak,
How stern he frowns, and with his broad brown arms
Chills the pale plain beneath him: mark yon altar,
The dark stream brawling round its rugged base,
These cliffs, these yawning caverns, this wide circus,
Skirted with unhewn stone: they awe my soul,
As if the very Genius of the place
Himself appear'd, and with terrific tread
Stalk'd thro' his drear domain. And yet, my friends,
(If shapes like his be but the fancy's coinage)
Surely there is a hidden power, that reigns
'Mid the lone majesty of untam'd nature,

Controling sober reason; tell me else,
Why do these haunts of barb'rous superstition
O'ercome me thus? I scorn them, yet they aw
me.
Call forth the British princes: in this gloom
I mean to school them to our enterprise.

[*Enter Vellinus and Elidurus.*

AULUS DIDIUS, VELLINUS, ELIDURUS

Ye pledges dear of Cartismandua's faith,
Approach! and to mine uninstructed ear
Explain this scene of horror.

ELIDURUS.

Daring Roman;
Know that thou stand'st on consecrated ground
These mighty piles of magic-planted rock,
Thus rang'd in mystic order, mark the place
Where but at times of holiest festival
The Druid leads his train.

AULUS DIDIUS.

Where dwells the seer?

VELLINUS.

In yonder shaggy cave; on which the moon
Now sheds a side-long gleam. His brotherhoo
Possess the neighb'ring cliffs.

AULUS DIDIUS.

Yet up the hill
Mine eye descries a distant range of caves,

Delv'd in the ridges of the craggy steep:
And this way still another.

ELIDURUS.

On the left
Reside the Sages skill'd in nature's lore:
The changeful universe, its numbers, powers,
Studious they measure, save when meditation
Gives place to holy rites: then in the grove
Each hath his rank and function. Yonder grots
Are tenanted by bards, who nightly thence,
Rob'd in their flowing vests of innocent white,
Descend, with harps that glitter to the moon,
Hymning immortal strains. The spirits of air,
Of earth, of water, nay, of heav'n itself,
Do listen to their lay: and oft, 'tis said,
In visible shapes dance they a magic round
To the high minstrelsy. Now, if thine eye
Be sated with the view, haste to thy ships;
And ply thine oars; for, if the Druids learn
This bold intrusion, thou wilt find it hard
To foil their fury.

AULUS DIDIUS.

Prince, I did not moor
My light-arm'd shallops on this dangerous strand
To sooth a fruitless curiosity:
I come in quest of proud Caractacus;
Who, when our veterans put his troops to flight,
Found refuge here.

ELIDURUS.

If here the Monarch rests,
Presumptuous Chief! thou might'st as well essay

To pluck him from yon stars: Earth's ample range
Contains no surer refuge: underneath
The soil we tread, a hundred secret paths,
Scoop'd thro' the living rock in winding maze,
Lead to as many caverns, dark, and deep:
In which the hoary sages act their rites
Mysterious, rites of such strange potency,
As, done in open day, would dim the sun,
Tho' thron'd in noontide brightness. In such dens
He may for life lie hid.

AULUS DIDIUS.

We know the task
Most difficult: yet has thy royal mother
Furnish'd the means.

ELIDURUS.

My mother, say'st thou, Roman?

AULUS DIDIUS.

In proof of that firm faith she lends to Rome,
She gave you up her honour's hostages.

ELIDURUS.

She did: and we submit.

AULUS DIDIUS.

To Rome we bear you;
From your dear country bear you; from your joys,
Your loves, your friendships, all your souls hold precious.

ELIDURUS.

And dost thou taunt us, Roman, with our fate?

AULUS DIDIUS.

No, youth, by heav'n, I would avert that fate.
Wish ye for liberty?

VELLINUS, ELIDURUS.

More than for life.

AULUS DIDIUS.

And would do much to gain it?

VELLINUS.

Name the task.

AULUS DIDIUS.

The task is easy. Haste ye to these Druids:
Tell them ye come, commission'd by your Queen,
To seek the great Caractacus; and call
His valour to her aid, against the legions,
Which, led by our Ostorius, now assail
Her frontiers. The late treaty she has seal'd
Is yet unknown; and this her royal signet,
Which more to mask our purpose was obtain'd,
Shall be your pledge of faith. The eager king
Will gladly take the charge; and, he consenting,
What else remains, but to the Meinai's shore
Ye lead his credulous step? there will we seize him:
Bear him to Rome, the substitute for you,
And give you back to freedom.

VELLINUS.

If the Druids—

AULUS DIDIUS.

If they, or he, prevent this artifice,
Then force must take its way: then flaming brands,
And biting axes, wielded by our soldiers,
Must level these thick shades, and so unlodge
The lurking savage.

ELIDURUS.

Gods! shall Mona perish!

AULUS DIDIUS.

Princes, her ev'ry trunk shall on the ground
Stretch its gigantic length; unless, ere dawn,
Ye lure this untam'd lion to our toils.
Go then, and prosper; I shall to the ships,
And there expect his coming. Youths, remember,
He must to Rome to grace great Cæsar's triumph:
Cæsar and Fate demand him at your hand.

[*Exeunt Aulus Didius and Romans.*

ELIDURUS, VELLINUS.

ELIDURUS.

And will heav'n suffer it? Will the just gods,
That tread yon spangled pavement o'er our heads,
Look from their sky and yield him? Will these Druids,
Their sage vicegerents, not call down the thunder;
And will not instant its hot bolts be darted
In such a righteous cause? Yes, good old king,
Yes, last of Britons, thou art heav'n's own pledge;
And shalt be such till death.

VELLINUS.

What means my brother?
Dost thou refuse the charge?

ELIDURUS.

Dost thou accept it?

VELLINUS.

It gives us liberty.

ELIDURUS.

It makes us traitors.
Gods, would Vellinus do a deed of baseness?

VELLINUS.

Will Elidurus scorn the proffer'd boon
Of freedom?

ELIDURUS.

Yes, when such its guilty price,
Brother, I spurn it.

VELLINUS.

Go then, foolish boy!
I'll do the deed myself.

ELIDURUS.

It shall not be:
I will proclaim the fraud.

VELLINUS.

Wilt thou? 'tis well.
Hie to yon cave; call loudly on the Druid;
And bid him drag to ignominious death
The partner of thy blood. Yet hope not thou

To 'scape; for thou didst join my impious steps:
Therefore his wrath shall curse thee: thou shalt live;
Yet shalt thou live an interdicted wretch,
All rights of nature cancell'd.

ELIDURUS.

O Vellinus!
Rend not my soul: by heav'n thou know'st I love thee,
As fervently as brother e'er lov'd brother:
And, loving thee, I thought I lov'd mine honour.
Ah! do not wake, dear youth, in this true breast
So fierce a conflict.

VELLINUS.

Honour's voice commands
Thou should'st obey thy mother, and thy queen.
Honour and Holiness alike conspire
To bid thee save these consecrated groves
From Roman devastation.

ELIDURUS.

Horrid thought!
Hence let us haste, ev'n to the furthest nook
Of this wide isle; nor view the sacrilege.

VELLINUS.

No, let us stay, and by our prosperous art
Prevent the sacrilege. Mark me, my brother,
More years and more experience have matur'd
My sober thought; I will convince thy youth,
That this our deed has ev'ry honest sanction
Cool reason may demand.

ELIDURUS.

To Rome with reason:
Try if 'twill bring her deluging ambition
Into the level course of right and justice:
Try if 'twill tame these insolent invaders;
Who thus, in savageness of conquest, claim
Whom chance of war has spar'd. Do this, and prosper.
But, pray thee, do not reason from my soul
Its inbred honesty: that holy flame,
Howe'er eclips'd by Rome's black influence
In vulgar minds, ought still to brighten ours.

VELLINUS.

Vain talker, leave me.

ELIDURUS.

No, I will not leave thee:
I must not, dare not, in these perilous shades.
Think, if thy fraud should fail, these holy men,
How will their justice rend thy trait'rous limbs?
If thou succeed'st, the fiercer pangs of conscience,
How will they ever goad thy guilty soul?
Mercy, defend us! see, the awful Druids
Are issuing from their caves: hear'st thou yon signal?
Lo, on the instant all the mountain whitens
With slow-descending bards. Retire, retire;
This is the hour of sacrifice: to stay,
Is death.

VELLINUS.

I'll wait the closing of their rites
In yonder vale: do thou, as likes thee best,
Betray, or aid me.

ELIDURUS.

To betray thee, youth,
That love forbids; honour, alas! to aid thee.

[*Exeunt.*

Enter CHORUS.

SEMICHORUS.

Sleep and silence reign around;
Not a night-breeze wakes to blow;
Circle, sons, this holy ground;
Circle close, in triple row.
And, if mask'd in vapours drear,
Any earth-born Spirit dare
To hover round this sacred space,
Haste with light spells the murky foe to chase.
Lift your boughs of vervain blue,
Dipt in cold September dew;
And dash the moisture chaste, and clear,
O'er the ground, and thro' the air.
Now the place is purg'd and pure.
Brethren! say, for this high hour
Are the milk-white steers prepar'd?
Whose necks the rude yoke never scar'd,
To the furrow yet unbroke?
For such must bleed beneath yon oak.

SEMICHORUS.

Druid, these, in order meet,
Are all prepar'd.

SEMICHORUS.

But tell me yet,
Cadwall! did thy step profound
Dive into the cavern deep,
Twice twelve fathom under ground,
Where our sage fore-fathers sleep?
Thence with reverence hast thou borne,
From the consecrated chest,
The golden sickle, scrip, and vest,
Whilom by old Belinus worn?

SEMICHORUS.

Druid, these, in order meet,
Are all prepar'd.

SEMICHORUS.

But tell me yet,
From the grot of charms and spells,
Where our matron sister dwells,
Brennus! has thy holy hand
Safely brought the druid wand;
And the potent adder-stone,
Gender'd 'fore th' autumnal moon?
When, in undulating twine,
The foaming snakes prolific join;
When they hiss, and when they bear
Their wond'rous egg aloof in air;
Thence, before to earth it fall,
The Druid, in his hallow'd pall,

Receives the prize;
And instant flies,
Follow'd by th' envenom'd brood,
Till he cross the crystal flood.

SEMICHORUS.

Druid, these, in order meet,
Are all prepar'd.

SEMICHORUS.

Then all's complete.
And now let nine of the selected band,
Whose greener years befit such station best,
With wary circuit pace around the grove:
And guard each inlet; watchful, lest the eye
Of busy curiosity profane
Pry on our rites: which now must be as close
As done i'th' very central womb of earth.
Occasion claims it; for Caractacus
This night demands admission to our train.
He, once our king, while ought his power avail'd
To save his country from the rod of tyrants,
That duty past, does wisely now retire
To end his days in secrecy and peace;
Druid with Druids, in this chief of groves,
Ev'n in the heart of Mona. See, he comes!
How awful is his port! mark him, my friends!
He looks, as doth the tower, whose nodding walls,
After the conflict of heav'n's angry bolts,
Frown with a dignity unmark'd before,
Ev'n in its prime of strength. Health to the king!

CARACTACUS, EVELINA, CHORUS.

CARACTACUS.

This holy place, methinks, doth this night wear
More than its wonted gloom: Druid, these groves
Have caught the dismal colouring of my soul,
Changing their dark dun garbs to very sable,
In pity to their guest. Hail, hallow'd oaks!
Hail, British born! who, last of British race,
Hold your primæval rights by nature's charter;
Not at the nod of Cæsar. Happy foresters,
Ye wave your bold heads in the liberal air;
Nor ask, for privilege, a prætor's edict.
Ye, with your tough and intertwisted roots,
Grasp the firm rocks ye sprung from; and, erect
In knotty hardihood, still proudly spread
Your leafy banners 'gainst the tyrannous north,
Who Roman like assails you. Tell me, Druid,
Is it not better to be such as these,
Than be the thing I am?

CHORUS.

To be the thing,
Eternal wisdom wills, is ever best.

CARACTACUS.

But I am lost to that predestin'd use
Eternal wisdom will'd, and fitly therefore
May wish a change of being. I was born
A king; and heav'n, who bade these warrior oaks
Lift their green shields against the fiery sun,
To fence their subject plain, did mean, that I

Should, with as firm an arm, protect my people
Against the pestilent glare of Rome's ambition.
I fail'd; and how I fail'd, thou know'st too well;
So does the babbling world: and therefore, Druid,
I would be any thing save what I am.

CHORUS.

See, to thy wish, the holy rites prepar'd,
Which, if heav'n frown not, consecrate thee Druid:
See to the altar's base the victims led,
From whose free-gushing blood ourself shall read
Its high behests; which if assenting found,
These hands around thy chosen limbs shall wrap
The vest of sanctity; while at the act
Yon white-rob'd bards, sweeping their solemn harps,
Shall lift their choral warblings to the skies,
And call the gods to witness. Meanwhile, Prince,
Bethink thee well, if ought on this vain earth
Still holds too firm an union with thy soul,
Estranging it from peace.

CARACTACUS.

I had a queen:
Bear with my weakness, Druid! this tough breast
Must heave a sigh, for she is unreveng'd.
And can I taste true peace, she unreveng'd?
So chaste, so lov'd a queen? ah, Evelina!
Hang not thus weeping on the feeble arm
That could not save thy mother.

EVELINA.

To hang thus
Softens the pang of grief; and the sweet thought,
That a fond father still supports his child,
Sheds, on my pensive mind, such soothing balm,
As doth the blessing of these pious seers,
When most they wish our welfare. Would to heav'n
A daughter's presence could as much avail,
To ease her father's woes, as his doth mine.

CARACTACUS.

Ever most gentle! come unto my bosom:
Dear pattern of the precious prize I lost,
Lost, so inglorious lost; my friends, these eyes
Did see her torn from my defenceless camp;
Whilst I, hemm'd round by squadrons, could not save her:
My boy, still nearer to the darling pledge,
Beheld her shrieking in the ruffian's arm;
Beheld, and fled.

EVELINA.

Ah! Sir, forbear to wound
My brother's fame; he fled, but to recall
His scatter'd forces to pursue and save her.

CARACTACUS.

Daughter, he fled. Now, by yon gracious moon,
That rising saw the deed, and instant hid
Her blushing face in twilight's dusky veil,
The flight was parricide.

EVELINA.

Indeed, indeed,
I know him valiant; and not doubt he fell
'Mid slaughter'd thousands of the haughty foe,
Victim to filial love. Arviragus,
Thou hadst no sister near the bloody field,
Whose sorrowing search, led by yon orb of night,
Might find thy body; wash with tears thy wounds;
And wipe them with her hair.

CHORUS.

Peace, virgin, peace:
Nor thou, sad prince, reply; whate'er he is,
Be he a captive, fugitive, or corse,
He is what heav'n ordain'd: these holy groves
Permit no exclamation 'gainst heav'n's will
To violate their echoes: Patience, here,
Her meek hands folded on her modest breast,
In mute submission lifts th' adoring eye,
Ev'n to the storm that wrecks her.

EVELINA.

Holy Druid,
If ought my erring tongue has said pollutes
This sacred place, I from my soul abjure it.
And will these lips bar with eternal silence,
Rather than speak a word, or act a deed
Unmeet for thy sage daughters; blessing first
This hallow'd hour, that takes me from the world,
And joins me to their sober sisterhood.

CHORUS.

'Tis wisely said. See, Prince, this prudent maid,
Now, while the ruddy flame of sparkling youth

Glows on her beauteous cheek, can quit the world
Without a sigh, whilst thou——

CARACTACUS.

Would save my queen
From a base ravisher; would wish to plunge
This falchion in his breast, and so avenge
Insulted royalty. O holy men!
Ye are the sons of piety and peace;
Ye never felt the sharp vindictive spur
That goads the injur'd warrior; the hot tide,
That flushes crimson on the conscious cheek
Of him, who burns for glory; else indeed
Ye much would pity me: would curse the fate
That coops me here inactive in your groves,
Robs me of hope, tells me this trusty steel
Must never cleave one Roman helm again;
Never avenge my queen, nor free my country.

CHORUS.

'Tis heav'n's high will——

CARACTACUS.

I know it, reverend fathers!
'Tis heav'n's high will, that these poor aged eyes
Shall never more behold that virtuous woman,
To whom my youth was constant, 'twas heav'n's will
To take her from me at that very hour,
When best her love might sooth me; that black hour,
(May memory ever raze it from her records)
When all my squadrons fled, and left their king

Old and defenceless: him, who nine whole years
Had taught them how to conquer: yes, my friends,
For nine whole years against the sons of rapine
I led my veterans, oft to victory,
Never till then to shame. Bear with me, Druid,
I've done: begin the rites.

CHORUS.

O would to heav'n
A frame of mind, more fitted to these rites,
Possest thee, Prince! that resignation meek,
That dove-ey'd Peace, handmaid of Sanctity,
Approach'd this altar with thee: 'stead of these,
See I not gaunt revenge, ensanguin'd slaughter,
And mad ambition, clinging to thy soul,
Eager to snatch thee back to their domain,
Back to a vain and miserable world;
Whose misery, and vanity, tho' try'd,
Thou still hold'st dearer than these solemn shades,
Where quiet reigns with virtue? Try we yet
What holiness can do! for much it can:
Much is the potency of pious prayer:
And much the sacred influence convey'd
By sage mysterious office: when the soul,
Snatch'd by the power of music from her cell
Of fleshly thraldom, feels herself upborn
On plumes of extasy, and boldly springs,
'Mid swelling harmonies and pealing hymns,
Up to the porch of heav'n. Strike, then, ye Bards!
Strike all your strings symphonious; wake a strain
May penetrate, may purge, may purify,
His yet unhallow'd bosom; call ye hither

The airy tribe, that on yon mountain dwell,
Ev'n on majestic Snowdon: they, who never
Deign visit mortal men, save on some cause
Of highest import, but, sublimely shrin'd
On its hoar top in domes of crystalline ice,
Hold converse with those spirits, that possess
The skies pure sapphire, nearest heav'n itself.

ODE.

Mona on Snowdon calls:
Hear, thou king of mountains, hear;
Hark, she speaks from all her strings;
Hark, her loudest echo rings;
King of mountains, bend thine ear,
Send thy spirits, send them soon,
Now, when midnight and the moon
Meet upon thy front of snow:
See, their gold and ebon rod,
Where the sober sisters nod,
And greet in whispers sage and slow.
Snowdon mark! 'tis Magic's hour;
Now the mutter'd spell hath pow'r;
Pow'r to rend thy ribs of rock,
And burst thy base with thunder's shock;
But to thee no ruder spell
Shall Mona use, than those that dwell
In music's secret cells, and lie
Steep'd in the stream of harmony.

Snowdon has heard the strain:
Hark, amid the wond'ring grove
Other harpings answer clear,
Other voices meet our ear,

Pinions flutter, shadows move,
Busy murmurs hum around,
Rustling vestments brush the ground;
Round, and round, and round they go,
Thro' the twilight, thro' the shade,
Mount the oak's majestic head,
And gild the tufted misletoe.
Cease, ye glittering race of light,
Close your wings, and check your flight:
Here, arrang'd in order due,
Spread your robes of saffron hue;
For lo, with more than mortal fire,
Mighty Mador smites the lyre:
Hark, he sweeps the master-strings;
Listen all——

CHORUS.

Break off; a sullen smoke involves the altar;
The central oak doth shake; I hear the sound
Of steps profane: Caractacus, retire;
Bear hence the victims; Mona is polluted.

SEMICHORUS.

Father, as we did watch the eastern side,
We spied and instant seiz'd two stranger youths,
Who, in the bottom of a shadowy dell,
Held earnest converse: Britons do they seem,
And of Brigantian race.

CHORUS.

Haste, drag them hither.

VELLINUS, ELIDURUS, CHORUS.

ELIDURUS.

O spare, ye sage and venerable Druids!
Your countrymen and sons.

CHORUS.

And are ye Britons?
Unheard of profanation: Rome herself,
Ev'n impious Rome, whom conquest makes more impious,
Would not have dar'd so rashly. O! for words,
Big with the fiercest force of execration,
To blast the deed, and doers.

ELIDURUS.

Spare the curse,
Oh spare our youth!

CHORUS.

Is it not now the hour,
The holy hour, when to the cloudless height
Of yon starr'd concave climbs the full-orb'd moon,
And to this nether world in solemn stillness
Gives sign, that to the list'ning ear of heav'n
Religion's voice should plead? The very babe
Knows this, and, chance awak'd, his little hands
Lifts to the gods, and on his innocent couch
Calls down a blessing. Shall your manly years
Plead ignorance, and impiously presume
To tread, with vile unconsecrated feet,
On Mona's hallow'd plain? know, wretches, know,

At any hour such boldness is a crime,
At this 'tis sacrilege.

VELLINUS.

Were Mona's plain
More hallow'd still, hallow'd as is heav'n's self,
The cause might plead our pardon.

ELIDURUS.

Mighty Druid!
True, we have rashly dar'd, yet forc'd by duty,
Our sov'reign's mandate——

VELLINUS.

Elder by my birth,
Brother, I claim, in right of eldership,
To open our high embassy.

CHORUS.

Speak then;
But see thy words answer in honest weight
To this proud prelude. Youth! they must be weighty,
T'atone for such a crime.

VELLINUS.

If then to give
New nerves to vanquish'd valour; if to do,
What, with the blessing of the gods, may save
A bleeding country from oppression's sword,
Be weighty business, know, on our commission,
And on its hop'd success, that weight depends.

CHORUS.

Declare it then at once, briefly and boldly.

VELLINUS.

Caractacus is here.

CHORUS.

Say'st thou, proud boy?
'Tis boldly said, and, grant 'twere truly said,
Think'st thou he were not here from fraud or force
As safe, as in a camp of conquerors?
Here, youth, he would be guarded by the gods;
Their own high hostage; and each sacred hair
Of his selected head, would in these caverns
Sleep with the unsunn'd silver of the mine,
As precious and as safe; record the time,
When Mona e'er betray'd the hapless wretch,
That made her groves his refuge.

VELLINUS.

Holy Druid!
Think not so harshly of our enterprise.
Can force, alas! dwell in our unarm'd hands?
Can fraud in our young bosoms? No, dread seer,
Our business told, I trust thou'lt soon disclaim
The vain suspicion; and thy holy ear
(Be brave Caractacus or here or absent)
Shall instant learn it. From the north we come;
The sons of her whose heav'n-entrusted sway
Blesses the bold Brigantes; men who firmly
Have three long moons withstood those Roman powers,
Which, led by fell Ostorius, still assail
Our frontiers: yet so oft have our stout swords
Repell'd their hot assault, that now, like falcons,

They hang suspended, loath to quit their prey,
Not daring yet to seize it. Such the state
Of us and Rome; in which our prudent mother,
Revolving what might best secure her country
From this impending ruin, gave us charge
To seek the great Caractacus, and call
His valour to her aid, to lead her bands,
To fight the cause of liberty and Britain,
And quell these ravagers.

[*Caractacus starts from behind the altar.*

CARACTACUS, VELLINUS, ELIDURUS, CHORUS.

CARACTACUS.

And ye have found me;
Friends, ye have found me: lead me to your queen,
And the last purple drop in these old veins
Shall fall for her and Britain.

CHORUS.

Rash, rash Prince!

VELLINUS.

Ye blest immortal powers! is this the man,
The more than man, who for nine bloody years
Withstood all Rome? He is; that warlike front,
Seam'd o'er with honest scars, proclaims he is:
Kneel, brother, kneel, while in his royal hand
We lodge the signet: this, in pledge of faith,
Great Cartismandua sends, and with it tells thee
She has a nobler pledge than this behind;
Thy Queen——

CARACTACUS.

Guideria!

VELLINUS.

Safely with our mother.

CARACTACUS.

How, when, where rescu'd? mighty gods, I thank ye,
For it is true, this signet speaks it true.
O tell me briefly.

VELLINUS.

In a sally, Prince,
Which, wanting abler chiefs, my gracious mother
Committed to my charge, our troops assail'd
One outwork of the camp; the mask of night
Favour'd our arms, and there my happy hand
Was doom'd with other prisoners to release
The captive matron.

CARACTACUS.

Let me clasp thee, youth,
And thou shalt be my son: I had one, stranger,
Just of thy years; he look'd like thee right honest;
Had just that freeborn boldness on his brow,
And yet he fail'd me. Were it not for him,
Who, as thou seest, ev'n at this hour of joy,
Draws tears down mine old cheek, I were as blest
As the great gods. Oh, he has all disgrac'd
His high-born ancestry! But I'll forget him.
Haste, Evelina, barb my knotty spear,
Bind fast this trusty falchion to my thigh,
My bow, my target——

CHORUS.

Rash Caractacus!
What hast thou done? What dost thou mean to do?

CARACTACUS.

To save my country.

CHORUS.

To betray thyself.
That thou hast done; the rest thou canst not do,
If Heav'n forbids; and of its awful will
Thy fury recks not: has the bleeding victim
Pour'd a propitious stream? the milk-white steeds
Unrein'd and neighing pranc'd with fav'ring steps?
Say, when these youths approach'd, did not a gust
Of livid smoke involve the bickering flame?
Did not the forest tremble? every omen
Led thee to doubt their honesty of purpose;
And yet, before their tongues could tell that purpose,
Ere I had tender'd, as our laws ordain,
Their test of faith, thy rudeness rush'd before me,
Infringing my just rights.

CARACTACUS.

Druid, methinks,
At such a time, in such a cause, reproof
Might bate its sternness. Now, by heav'n, I feel,
Beyond all omens, that within my breast
Which marshals me to conquest; something here
That snatches me beyond all mortal fears,
Lifts me to where upon her jasper throne
Sits flame-rob'd Victory, who calls me son,

ıd crowns me with a palm, whose deathless green
all bloom when Cæsar's fades.

CHORUS.

Vain confidence!

CARACTACUS.

:t I submit in all——

CHORUS.

'Tis meet thou should'st.
ou art a King, a sov'reign o'er frail man;
m a Druid, servant of the gods;
:h service is above such sov'reignty,
well thou know'st: if they should prompt these lips
interdict the thing thou dar'st to do,
ıat would avail thy daring?

CARACTACUS.

Holy man!
t thou wilt bless it; Heav'n will bid thee bless it;
ou know'st that, when we fight to save our country,
: fight the cause of Heav'n. The man that falls,
ls hallow'd; falls a victim for the gods;
· them and for their altars.

CHORUS.

Valiant Prince!
nk not we lightly rate our country's weal,
thee, our country's champion. Well we know
: glorious meed of those exalted souls,

Who flame like thee for freedom: mark me, Prince,
The time will come, when destiny and death,
Thron'd in a burning car, the thund'ring wheels
Arm'd with gigantic scythes of adamant,
Shall scour this field of life: and in the rear
The fiend Oblivion: kingdoms, empires, worlds
Melt in the general blaze: when, lo, from high
Andraste darting, catches from the wreck
The roll of fame, claps her ascending plumes,
And stamps on orient stars each patriot name,
Round her eternal dome.

CARACTACUS.

Speak ever thus,
And I will hear thee, till attention faint
In heedless ecstasy.

CHORUS.

This tho' we know,
Let man beware with headlong zeal to rush
Where slaughter calls; it is not courage, Prince,
No nor the pride and practis'd skill in arms,
That gains this meed: the warrior is no patriot,
Save when, obsequious to the will of Heav'n,
He draws the sword of vengeance.

CARACTACUS.

Surely, Druid,
Such fair occasion speaks the will of Heav'n——

CHORUS.

Monarch, perchance thou hast a fair occasion:
But, if thou hast, the gods will soon declare it:
Their sov'reign will thou know'st not; this to learn

Demands our search. Ye mortals all retire!
Leave ye the grove to us and inspiration;
Nor let a step, or ev'n one glance profane,
Steal from your caverns: stay, my holy brethren,
Ye time-ennobled Seers, whose rev'rend brows
Full eighty winters whiten; you, ye Bards,
Leoline, Cadwall, Hoel, Cantaber,
Attend upon our slumbers: wond'rous men,
Ye, whose skill'd fingers know how best to lead,
Thro' all the maze of sound the wayward step
Of Harmony, recalling oft, and oft
Permitting her unbridled course to rush
Thro' dissonance to concord, sweetest then
Ev'n when expected harshest. Mador, thou
Alone shalt lift thy voice; no choral peal
Shall drown thy solemn warblings; thou best know'st
That opiate charm which lulls corporeal sense:
Thou hast the key, great Bard! that best can ope
The portal of the soul; unlock it straight,
And lead the pensive pilgrim on her way,
Through the vast regions of futurity.

[*Exeunt Caractacus, Vellinus, &c.*

CHORUS.

ODE.

Hail, thou harp of Phrygian frame!
In years of yore that Camber bore
From Troy's sepulchral flame;
With antient Brute, to Britain's shore
The mighty minstrel came:

Sublime upon the burnish'd prow,
He bade thy manly modes to flow;
Britain heard the descant bold,
She flung her white arms o'er the sea;
Proud in her leafy bosom to enfold
The freight of harmony.

Mute till then was ev'ry plain,
Save where the flood o'er mountains rude
Tumbled his tide amain:
And Echo from th' impending wood
Resounded the hoarse strain;
While from the north the sullen gale
With hollow whistlings shook the vale;
Dismal notes, and answer'd soon
By savage howl the heaths among,
What time the wolf doth bay the trembling moon,
And thin the bleating throng.

Thou spak'st, imperial lyre,
The rough roar ceas'd, and airs from high
Lapt the land in ecstasy:
Fancy, the fairy, with thee came;
And Inspiration, bright-ey'd dame,
Oft at thy call would leave her sapphire sky;
And, if not vain the verse presumes,
Ev'n now some chaste divinity is near:
For lo! the sound of distant plumes
Pants thro' the pathless desert of the air.
'Tis not the flight of her;
'Tis sleep, her dewy harbinger;

Change, my harp, O change thy measures;
Cull, from thy mellifluous treasures,
  Notes that steal on even feet,
Ever slow, yet never pausing,
  Mixt with many a warble sweet,
In a ling'ring cadence closing,
While the pleas'd power sinks gently down the skies,
And seals with hand of down the Druid's slumb'ring eyes,
Thrice I pause, and thrice I sound
  The central string, and now I ring
(By measur'd lore profound)
  A sevenfold chime, and sweep, and swing
Above, below, around,
  To mix thy music with the spheres,
  That warble to immortal ears.
Inspiration hears the call;
  She rises from her throne above,
And, sudden as the glancing meteors fall,
  She comes, she fills the grove.

High her port; her waving hand
  A pencil bears; the days, the years,
Arise at her command,
  And each obedient colouring wears.
Lo, where Time's pictur'd band
  In hues ethereal glide along;
  O mark the transitory throng;
Now they dazzle, now they die,
  Instant they flit from light to shade,
Mark the blue forms of faint futurity,
  O mark them ere they fade.

Whence was that inward groan?
Why bursts thro' closed lids the tear?
Why uplifts the bristling hair
Its white and venerable shade?
Why down the consecrated head
Courses in chilly drops the dew of fear?
All is not well, the pale-ey'd moon
Curtains her head in clouds, the stars retire,
Save from the sultry south alone,
The swart star flings his pestilential fire;
Ev'n sleep herself will fly,
If not recall'd by harmony.
Wake, my lyre! thy softest numbers,
Such as nurse ecstatic slumbers,
Sweet as tranquil virtue feels
When the toil of life is ending,
While from the earth the spirit steals,
And, on new-born plumes ascending,
Hastens to lave in the bright fount of day,
Till Destiny prepare a shrine of purer clay.

[*The Druid waking, speaks.*

CHORUS.

It may not be. Avaunt terrific axe;
Why hangs thy bright edge glaring o'er the grove?
O for a giant's nerve to ward the stroke!
It bows, it falls.
Where am I? hush, my soul!
'Twas all a dream. Resume no more the strain:
The hour is past: my brethren! what ye saw,
(If what ye saw, as by your looks, I read,
Bore like ill-omen'd shape) hold it in silence.
The midnight air falls chilly on my breast;

And now I shiver, now a fev'rish glow
Scorches my vitals. Hark, some step approaches.

EVELINA, CHORUS.

EVELINA.

Thus, with my wayward fears, to burst unbidden
On your dread synod, rousing, as ye seem,
From holy trance, appears a desperate deed,
Ev'n to the wretch who dares it.

CHORUS.

Virgin! quickly
Pronounce the cause.

EVELINA.

Bear with a simple maid
Too prone to fear, perchance my fears are vain.

CHORUS.

But yet declare them.

EVELINA.

I suspect me much
The faith of these Brigantes.

CHORUS.

Say'st thou, Virgin?
Heed what thou say'st; Suspicion is a guest
That in the breast of man, of wrathful man,
Too oft his welcome finds; yet seldom sure
In that submissive calm that smooths the mind
Of maiden innocence.

EVELINA.

I know it well.
Yet must I still distrust the elder stranger:
For while he talks, (and much the flatterer talks)
His brother's silent carriage gives disproof
Of all his boast; indeed I mark'd it well;
And, as my father with the elder held
Bold speech and warlike, as is still his wont
When fir'd with hope of conquest, oft I saw
A sigh unbidden heave the younger's breast,
Half check'd as it was rais'd; sometimes, methought,
His gentle eye would cast a glance on me,
As if he pitied me; and then again
Would fasten on my father, gazing there
To veneration; then he'd sigh again,
Look on the ground, and hang his modest head
Most pensively.

CHORUS.

This may demand, my brethen,
More serious search: Virgin! proceed.

EVELINA.

'Tis true,
My father, rapt in high heroic zeal,
His ev'ry thought big with his country's freedom,
Heeds not the different carriage of these brethren,
The elder takes him wholly; yet, methinks,
The younger's manners have I know not what,
That speaks him far more artless. This besides,
Is it not strange, if, as the tale reports,
My mother sojourns with this distant queen,

should not send or to my sire, or me,
: fond remembrance of her love? ah! none,
ı tears I speak it, none, not her dear blessing
reach'd my longing ears.

CHORUS.

The gods, my brethren,
: wak'd these doubts in the untainted breast
ıis mild maiden; oft to female softness,
to the purity of virgin souls
ı Heav'n its voluntary light dispense,
:n victims bleed in vain. They must be spies.
thee, good Cantaber, and to our presence
mon the young Brigantian.

EVELINA.

Do not that,
if ye do, yet treat him nothing sternly:
softest terms from such a tender breast
l draw confession, and, if ye shall find
treason ye suspect, forbear to curse him.
t that my weakness means to guide your wisdom)
, as I think he would not wittingly
do a deed of baseness, were it granted
t I might question him, my heart forebodes
ıore could gain by gentleness and prayers,
n will the fiercest threats.

CHORUS.

:hance it may:
l quickly shalt thou try. But see the king!
l with him both the youths.

EVELINA.

Alas! my fears
Forewent my errand, else had I inform'd thee
That therefore did I come, and from my father
To gain admission. Mark the younger, Druid,
How sad he seems; oft did he in the cave
So fold his arms——

CHORUS.

We mark him much, and much
The elder's free and dreadless confidence.
Virgin, retire awhile in yonder vale,
Nor, till thy royal father quits the grove,
Resume thy station here.

[*Exit Evelina.*

CARACTACUS, CHORUS, VELLINUS, ELIDURUS.

CARACTACUS.

Forgive me, Druid!
My eager soul no longer could sustain
The pangs of expectation; hence I sent
The virgin innocence of Evelina,
Safest to break upon your privacy:
She not return'd, O pardon! that uncall'd
I follow: the great cause, I trust, absolves me:
'Tis your's, 'tis freedom's, 'tis the cause of Heav'n;
And sure Heav'n owns it such.

CHORUS.

Caractacus,
All that by sage and sanctimonious rites

of the gods be ask'd, we have essay'd,
t, nor to our wish, nor to their wont,
ıey benign assent.

CARACTACUS.

Death to our hopes!

CHORUS.

ret we lay in sacred slumber tranc'd,
ınd sad to Fancy's frighted eye
ıpes of dun and murky hue advance,
tumultuous, all of gesture strange,
ssing horrible; starting we wak'd,
: no waking calm; still all was dark,
ıg our tinkling ears with screams of woe.
ɔus tremors still——

VELLINUS.

Of what suspicious?
our Queen——

CHORUS.

Restrain thy wayward tongue,
t youth! in such licentious mood
rrupt our speech ill suits thy years,
ɔrse our sanctity.

CARACTACUS.

'Tis his distress
ıim forget, what else his reverent zeal
pay ye holily. Think what he feels,
ɔuth! who fears yon moon, before she
wanes,
: his country conquer'd; see his mother

The victor's slave, her royal blood debas'd,
Dragging her chains thro' the throng'd stre
Rome,
To grace oppression's triumph. Horrid tho
Say, can it be that he, whose strenuous you
Adds vigour to his virtue, e'er can bear
This patiently? he comes to ask my aid,
And, that withheld, (as now he needs must
What means, alas! are left? search Britain r
What chief dares cope with Rome? what
but holds
His loan of power at a Proconsul's will,
At best a scepter'd slave?

VELLINUS.

Yes, Monarch, y
If Heav'n restrains thy formidable sword,
Or to its stroke denies that just success
Which Heav'n alone can give, I fear me m
Our Queen, ourselves, nay, Britain's self,
perish.

CARACTACUS.

But is not this a fear makes virtue vain?
Tears from yon ministring regents of the s
Their right? Plucks from firm-handed P
dence,
The golden reins of sublunary sway,
And gives them to blind Chance? If this be
If tyranny must lord it o'er the earth,
There's anarchy in Heav'n. Nay, frown
Druid,
I do not think 'tis thus.

CHORUS.

We trust thou do'st not.

CARACTACUS.

Masters of wisdom! No: my soul confides
In that all-healing and all-forming Power,
Who, on the radiant day when Time was born,
Cast his broad eye upon the wild of ocean,
And calm'd it with a glance: then, plunging deep
His mighty arm, pluck'd from its dark domain
This throne of freedom, lifted it to light,
Girt it with silver cliffs, and call'd it Britain:
He did, and will preserve it.

CHORUS.

Pious prince,
In that all-healing and all-forming power
Still let thy soul confide; but not in men,
No, not in these, ingenuous as they seem,
Till they are try'd by that high test of faith
Our ancient laws ordain.

VELLINUS.

Illustrious seer,
Methinks our Sov'reign's signet well might plead
Her envoy's faith. Thy pardon, mighty Druid,
Not for ourselves, but for our Queen we plead;
Mistrusting us, ye wound her honour.

CHORUS.

Peace;
Our will admits no parley. Thither, youths,
Turn your astonish'd eyes; behold yon huge

And unhewn sphere of living adamant,
Which, pois'd by magic, rests its central
On yonder pointed rock: firm as it seems
Such is its strange and virtuous property,
It moves obsequious to the gentlest touch
Of him whose breast is pure; but to a trait
Tho' ev'n a giant's prowess nerv'd his arm,
It stands as fixt as Snowdon. No reply;
The gods command that one of you must no
Approach and try it: in your snowy vests,
Ye priests, involve the lots, and to the young
As is our wont, tender the choice of fate.

ELIDURUS.

Heav'ns! is it fall'n on me?

CHORUS.

Young Prince, it is;
Prepare thee for thy trial.

ELIDURUS.

Gracious gods!
Who may look up to your tremendous thrones,
And say his breast is pure? All-searching Power
Ye know already how and what I am;
And what ye mean to publish me in Mona,
To that I yield and tremble.

CARACTACUS.

Rouse thee, youth!
And with that courage honest truth supplies,
(For sure ye both are true) haste to the trial;
Behold, I lead thee on.

CHORUS.

Prince, we arrest
y hasty step; to witness this high test
tains to us alone. Awhile retire,
d in yon cave his brother be thy charge;
e trial past, again we will confer,
ıching that part which Heav'n's deciding choice
lls thee to act.

[*Exeunt Caractacus and Vellinus.*

CHORUS, ELIDURUS.

CHORUS.

Now be the rites prepar'd:
l now, ye Bards, chaunt ye that custom'd
hymn,
prelude of this fam'd solemnity.

ODE.

'hou Spirit pure, that spread'st unseen
pinions o'er this pond'rous sphere,
nd, breathing thro' each rigid vein,
st with stupendous life the marble mass,
l bid'st it bow upon its base,
Vhen sov'reign Truth is near;
it invisible! to thee
swell the solemn harmony;
lear us, and aid:
u that in Virtue's cause
-rulest Nature's laws,
ear, and aid with influence high
sons of peace and piety.

First-born of that ethereal tribe
Call'd into birth ere time or place,
Whom wave nor wind can circumscribe,
Heirs of the liquid liberty of light,
That float on rainbow pennons bright
Thro' all the wilds of space,
Yet thou alone of all thy kind
Can'st range the regions of the mind,
Thou only know'st
That dark meand'ring maze,
Where wayward Falshood strays,
And, seizing swift the lurking sprite,
Forces her forth to shame and light.

Thou can'st enter the dark cell
Where the vulture Conscience slumbers,
And, unarm'd by charming spell,
Or magic numbers,
Can'st rouse her from her formidable sleep,
And bid her dart her raging talons deep;
Yet, ah! too seldom doth the furious fiend
Thy bidding wait; vindictive, self prepar'd,
She knows her torturing time; too sure to re
The trembling heart, when virtue quits her gua
Pause then, celestial guest!
And, brooding on thine adamantine sphere,
If fraud approach, Spirit, that fraud declare
To Conscience and to Mona leave the rest.

CHORUS.

Heard'st thou the awful invocation, youth,
Wrapt in those holy harpings?

ELIDURUS.

Sage, I did;
And it came o'er my soul as doth the thunder,
While distant yet, with an expected burst
t threats the trembling ear. Now to the trial.

CHORUS.

re that, bethink thee well what rig'rous doom
ttends thine act, if failing, certain death:
o certain, that in our absolving tongues
ests not that power may save thee: thou must
die.

EVELINA, ELIDURUS, CHORUS.

EVELINA.

ie, say'st thou? Druid!

ELIDURUS.

Evelina, here!
ad to the rock.

CHORUS.

No, youth, awhile we spare thee;
id, in our stead, permit this royal maiden
urge thee first with virgin gentleness.
spect our clemency, and meet her questions
ith answers prompt and true; so may'st thou
'scape
sterner trial.

ELIDURUS.

Rather to the rock.——

EVELINA.

Dost thou disdain me, Prince? Lost as I am,
Methinks the daughter of Caractacus
Might merit milder treatment: I was born
To royal hopes and promise, nurs'd i' th' lap
Of soft prosperity; alas the change!
I meant but to address a few brief words
To this young Prince, and he doth turn his eye,
And scorns to answer me.

ELIDURUS.

Scorn thee, sweet maid?
No, 'tis the fear——.

EVELINA.

And canst thou fear me, youth?
Ev'n while I led a life of royalty,
I bore myself to all with meek deportment,
In nothing harsh, or cruel: and howe'er
Misfortune works upon the minds of men,
(For some they say it turns to very stone)
Mine I am sure it softens. Wert thou guilty,
Yet I should pity thee; nay, wert thou leagu'd
To load this suffering heart with more misfor
tunes,
Still should I pity thee; nor e'er believe
Thou would'st, on free and voluntary choice,
Betray the innocent.

ELIDURUS.

Indeed I would not.

EVELINA.

:ious youth, I do believe thou would'st
not:
:hy brow the liberal hand of Heav'n
tray'd truth as visible and bold,
the pictur'd suns that deckt the brows
brave ancestors. Say then, young Prince,
:refore have I wish'd to question thee)
: no token of a mother's fondness
:xpecting child? Gentle thou seem'st,
: that gentleness would prompt thine heart
, and to sooth with courteous office,
like her's. A captive and a queen
re than common claim for pity, Prince,
n the ills of venerable age
use enough to move thy tender nature.
's o'ercharge thine eye. Alas, my fears!
or sore infirmity had seiz'd her,
hou left'st the palace, else her lips
thy care entrusted some kind message,
st her hapless daughter by thy tongue.
she were here!

ELIDURUS.

Would Heav'n she were!

EVELINA.

Ah, why?

ELIDURUS.

you wish it.

EVELINA.

Thanks, ingenuous youth,
For this thy courtesy. Yet, if the Queen
Thy mother shines with such rare qualities,
As late thy brother boasted, she will calm
Her woes, and I shall clasp her aged knees
Again, in peace and liberty.——Alas!
He speaks not; all my fears are just.

ELIDURUS.

What fears?
The Queen Guideria is not dead.

EVELINA.

Not dead!
But is she in that happy state of freedom,
Which we were taught to hope? Why sigh'st thou, youth?
Thy years have yet been prosp'rous. Did thy father
E'er lose a kingdom? Did captivity
E'er seize thy shrieking mother? thou can'st go
To yonder cave, and find thy brother safe:
He is not lost, as mine is. Youth, thou sigh'st
Again; thou hast not sure such cause for sorrow;
But if thou hast, give me thy griefs, I pray thee;
I have a heart can softly sympathize,
And sympathy is soothing.

ELIDURUS.

O Gods! Gods!
She tears my soul. What shall I say?

EVELINA.

Perchance,
For all in this bad world must have their woes,
Thou too hast thine; and may'st like me, be wretched.
Haply amid the ruinous waste of war,
'Mid that wild havoc, which those sons of blood
Bring on our groaning country, some chaste maid,
Whose tender soul was link'd by love to thine,
Might fall the trembling prey to Roman rage,
Ev'n at the golden hour, when holy rites
Had seal'd your virtuous vows. If it were so,
Indeed I pity her!

ELIDURUS.

Not that: not that.
Never till now did beauty's matchless beam——
But I am dumb.

EVELINA.

Why that dejected eye?
And why this silence? that some weighty grief
O'erhangs thy soul, thy ev'ry look proclaims.
Why then refuse it words? The heart, that bleeds
From any stroke of fate or human wrongs,
Loves to disclose itself, that list'ning pity
May drop a healing tear upon the wound.
'Tis only when with inbred horror smote
At some base act, or done, or to be done,
That the recoiling soul, with conscious dread,
Shrinks back into itself. But thou, good youth—

ELIDURUS.

Cease, royal maid! permit me to depart—

EVELINA.

Yet hear me, stranger! Truth and secresy,
Tho' friends, are seldom necessary friends—

ELIDURUS.

I go to try my truth—

EVELINA.

O! go not hence,
In wrath; think not, that I suspect thy virtue:
Yet ignorance may oft make virtue slide,
And if—

ELIDURUS.

In pity spare me.

EVELINA.

If thy brother—
Nay, start not, do not turn thine eye from mine;
Speak, I conjure thee, is his purpose honest?
I know the guilty price that barbarous Rome
Sets on my father's head; and gold, vile gold,
Has now a charm for Britons: brib'd by this,
Should he betray him—Yes, I see thou shudder'st
At the dire thought; yet not, as if 'twere strange;
But as our fears were mutual. Ah, young stranger;
That open face scarce needs a tongue to utter
What works within. Come then, ingenuous Prince,
And instant make discovery to the Druid,
While yet 'tis not too late.

ELIDURUS.

Ah! what discover?
Say, whom must I betray?

EVELINA.

Thy brother.

ELIDURUS.

Ha!

EVELINA.

no brother, if his guilty soul
with such perfidy. O all ye stars!
be brother to a youth like thee,
ould betray an old and honour'd King,
ing his countryman, and one whose prowess
uarded Britain 'gainst th' assailing world?
be brother to a youth like thee,
om a young, defenceless, innocent maid,
take that King, her father? Make her suffer
t an orphan suffers? More perchance:
fian foe.—O tears, ye choke my utterance!
be brother to a youth like thee,
ould defile his soul by such black deeds?
ot be ——And yet, thou still art silent;
outh, and see me weep. Ah, see me kneel:
; royal blood, not wont to kneel,
ll I kneel to thee. O save my father!
distressful maiden from the force
arous men! Be thou a brother to me,
ne alas! hah! [*Sees Arviragus entering.*

IRAGUS, EVELINA, ELIDURUS, CHORUS.

ARVIRAGUS.

Evelina, rise!
maid, I ne'er will tamely see thee kneel,
the foot of Cæsar.

EVELINA.

'Tis himself:
And he will prove my father's fears were false,
False as his son is brave. Thou best of brothers,
Come to my arms. Where hast thou been, thou wanderer?
How wer't thou sav'd? Indeed, Arviragus,
I never shed such tears, since thou wer't lost,
For these are tears of rapture.

ARVIRAGUS.

Evelina?
Fain would I greet thee, as a brother ought:
But wherefore didst thou kneel?

EVELINA.

O! ask not now.

ARVIRAGUS.

By heav'n I must, and he must answer me,
Whoe'er he be. What art thou, sullen stranger?

ELIDURUS.

A Briton.

ARVIRAGUS.

Brief and bold.

EVELINA.

Ah, spare the taunt:
He merits not thy wrath. Behold the Druids;
Lo, they advance: with holy reverence first
Thou must address their sanctity.

ARVIRAGUS.

I will.

But see, proud boy, thou do'st not quit the grove,
Till time allows us parley.

ELIDURUS.

Prince, I mean not.

ARVIRAGUS.

Sages, and sons of heav'n! Illustrious Druids!
Abruptly I approach your sacred presence:
Yet such dire tidings——

CHORUS.

On thy peril, peace!
Thou stand'st accus'd, and by a father's voice,
Of crimes abhorr'd, of cowardice and flight;
And therefore may'st not in these sacred groves
Utter polluted accents. Quickly say,
Wherefore thou fled'st? For that base fact unclear'd
We hold no further converse.

ARVIRAGUS.

O ye Gods!
Am I the son of your Caractacus?
And could I fly?

CHORUS.

Waste not or time or words:
But tell us why thou fled'st?

ARVIRAGUS.

I fled not, Druid!
By the great Gods I fled not! save to stop
Our dastard troops, that basely turn'd their backs.
I stopt, I rallied them, when lo a shaft
Of random cast did level me with earth,

Where pale and senseless, as the slain around me,
I lay till midnight: then, as from long trance
Awoke, I crawl'd upon my feeble limbs
To a lone cottage, where a pitying hind
Lodg'd me, and nourish'd me. My strength repair'd,
It boots not that I tell what humble arts
Compell'd I us'd to screen me from the foe.
How now a peasant from a beggarly scrip
I sold cheap food to slaves, that nam'd the price,
Nor after gave it. Now a minstrel poor
With ill-tun'd harp, and uncouth descant shrill
I ply'd a thriftless trade, and by such shifts
Did win obscurity to shroud my name.
At length to other conquests in the north
Ostrious led his legions: safer now,
Yet not secure, I to some valiant chiefs,
Whom war had spar'd, discover'd what I was;
And with them plan'd, how surest we might draw
Our scatter'd forces to some rocky fastness
In rough Caernarvon, there to breathe in freedom,
If not with brave incursion to oppress
The thinly-station'd foe. And soon our art
So well avail'd, that now at Snowdon's foot
Full twenty troops of hardy veterans wait
To call my sire their leader.

CHORUS.

Valiant youth——

EVELINA.

He is——I said he was a valiant youth,
Nor has he sham'd his race.

CHORUS.

We do believe
Thy modest tale: and may the righteous Gods
Thus ever shed upon thy noble breast
Discretion's cooling dew. When nurtur'd so,
Then, only then, doth valour bloom mature.

ARVIRAGUS.

Yet vain is valour, howsoe'er it bloom:
Druid, the Gods frown on us. All my hopes
Are blasted; I shall ne'er rejoin my friends,
Ne'er bless them with my father. Holy men,
I have a tale to tell will shake your souls.
Your Mona is invaded; Rome approaches,
Ev'n to these groves approaches.

SEMICHORUS.

Horror! horror!

ARVIRAGUS.

Late as I landed on yon highest beach,
Where nodding from the rocks the poplars fling
Their scatter'd arms, and dash them in the wave,
There were their vessels moor'd, as if they sought
Concealment in the shade, and as I past
Up yon thick-planted ridge, I 'spy'd their helms
'Mid brakes and boughs trench'd in the heath below,
Where like a nest of night-worms did they glitter,
Sprinkling the plain with brightness. On I sped
With silent step, yet oft did pass so near,
'Twas next to prodigy I 'scap'd unseen.

CHORUS.

Their number, Prince?

ARVIRAGUS.

Few, if mine hasty eye
Did find and count them all.

CHORUS.

O brethren, brethren,
Treason and sacrilege, worse foes than Rome,
Have led Rome hither. Instant seize that wretch,
And bring him to our presence.

CHORUS, ELIDURUS, ARVIRAGUS.

CHORUS.

Say, thou false one!
What doom befits the slave who sells his country?

ELIDURUS.

Death, sudden death!

CHORUS.

No, ling'ring piece-meal death;
And to such death thy brother and thyself
We now devote. Villain, thy deeds are known;
'Tis known ye led the impious Romans hither,
To slaughter us ev'n on our holy altars.

ELIDURUS.

That on my soul doth lie some secret grief,
These looks perforce will tell: it is not fear,
Druids, it is not fear that shakes me thus;
The great Gods know, it is not: ye can never:

For, what tho' wisdom lifts ye next those gods,
Ye cannot, like to them, unlock men's breasts,
And read their inmost thoughts. Ah! that ye could.

ARVIRAGUS.

What hast thou done?

ELIDURUS.

What, Prince, I will not tell.

CHORUS.

Wretch, there are means——

ELIDURUS.

I know, and terrible means;
And 'tis both fit, that you should try those means,
And I endure them: yet, I think, my patience
Will for some space baffle your torturing fury.

CHORUS.

Be that best known, when our inflicted goads
Harrow thy flesh!

ARVIRAGUS.

Stranger, ere this is try'd
Confess the whole of thy black perfidy;
So black, that when I look upon thy youth,
Read thy mild eye, and mark thy modest brow,
I think, indeed, thou durst not.

ELIDURUS.

Such a crime
Indeed I durst not; and would rather be
The very wretch thou seest. I'll speak no more.

CHORUS.

Brethren, 'tis so. The virgin's thoughts were just:
This youth has been deceiv'd.

ELIDURUS.

Yes, one word more.
You say, the Romans have invaded Mona.
Give me a sword and twenty honest Britons,
And I will quell those Romans. Vain demand!
Alas! you cannot: ye are men of peace:
Religion's self forbids. Lead then to torture.

ARVIRAGUS.

Now on my soul this youth doth move me much.

CHORUS.

Think not religion and our holy office
Doth teach us tamely, like the bleating lamb,
To crouch before oppression, and with neck
Outstretch'd await the stroke. Mistaken boy!
Did not strict justice claim thee for her victim,
We might full safely send thee to these Romans,
Inviting their hot charge. Know, when I blow
That sacred trumpet bound with sable fillets
To yonder branching oak, the awful sound
Calls forth a thousand Britons train'd alike
In holy and in martial exercise,
Not by such mode and rule, as Romans use,
But of that fierce portentous horrible sort,
As shall appal ev'n Romans.

ELIDURUS.

Gracious gods!

Then there are hopes indeed. O call them instant,
This Prince will lead them on: I'll follow him,
Tho' in my chains, and some way dash them round
To harm the haughty foe.

ARVIRAGUS.

A thousand Britons,
And arm'd! O instant blow the sacred trump,
And let me head them. Yet methinks this
youth——

CHORUS.

I know what thou would say, might join thee,
Prince.
True, where he free from crime, or had confest.

ELIDURUS.

Confest. Ah, think not, I will e'er——

ARVIRAGUS.

Reflect.
Either thyself or brother must have wrong'd us:
Then why conceal?

ELIDURUS.

Hast thou a brother? no!
Else hadst thou spar'd the word; and yet a sister
Lovely as thine might more than teach thee, Prince,
What 'tis to have a brother. Hear me, Druids.
Tho' I would prize an hour of freedom now
Before an age of any after date:
Tho' I would seize it as the gift of heav'n,
And use it as heav'n's gift: yet do not think,

I so will purchase it. Give it me freely,
I yet will spurn the boon, and hug my chains,
Till you do swear by your own hoary heads,
My brother shall be safe.

CHORUS.

Excellent youth!
Thy words do speak thy soul, and such a soul,
As wakes our wonder. Thou art free; thy brothe
Shall be thine honour's pledge! so will we use him
As thou art false or true.

ELIDURUS.

I ask no other.

ARVIRAGUS.

Thus then, my fellow-soldier, to thy clasp
I give the hand of friendship. Noble youth,
We'll speed, or die together.

CHORUS.

Hear us, Prince!
Mona permits not, that he fight her battles,
Till duly purified: for tho' his soul
Took up unwittingly this deed of baseness,
Yet is lustration meet. Learn, that in vice
There is a noisome rankness unperceiv'd
By gross corporeal sense, which so offends
Heav'n's pure divinities, as us the stench
Of vapour wafted from sulphureous pool,
Or pois'nous weed obscene. Hence doth the mar
Who ev'n converses with a villain, need
As much purgation, as the pallid wretch
'Scap'd from the walls, where frowning pestilenc

Spreads wide her livid banners. For this cause,
Ye Priests, conduct the youth to yonder grove,
And do the needful rites. Meanwhile ourself
Will lead thee, Prince, unto thy father's presence.—
But hold, the King comes forth.

[*Exeunt Priests with Elidurus.*

CARACTACUS, ARVIRAGUS, CHORUS, EVELINA.

CARACTACUS.

My son, my son!
What joy, what transport, doth thine aged sire
Feel in these filial foldings! Speak not, boy,
Nor interrupt that heart-felt ecstasy
Should strike us mute. I know what thou wouldst say,
Yet prithee, peace. Thy sister's voice hath clear'd thee,
And could excuse find words at this blest moment,
Trust me, I'd give it vent. But, 'tis enough,
Thy father welcomes thee to him and honour:
Honour, that now with rapt'rous certainty
Calls thee his own true offspring. Dost thou weep?
Ah, if thy tears swell not from joy's free spring,
I beg thee, spare them: I have done thee wrong,
Can make thee no atonement: none, alas!
Thy father scarce can bless thee, as he ought;
Unblest himself, beset with foes around,
Bereft of queen, of kingdom, and of soldiers,
He can but give thee portion of his dangers,
Perchance and of his chains: yet droop not, boy,
Virtue is still thine own.

ARVIRAGUS.

It is, my father;
Pure as from thine illustrious fount it came;
And that unsullied: let the world oppress us;
Let fraud and falsehood rivet fetters on us;
Still shall our souls be free: yet hope is ours,
As well as virtue.

CARACTACUS.

Spoken like a Briton.
True, hope is ours, and therefore let's prepare
The moments now are precious. Tell us, Drui
Is it not meet, we see the bands drawn out,
And mark their due array?

CHORUS.

Monarch, ev'n now
They skirt the grove.

CARACTACUS.

Then let us to their front——

CHORUS.

But is the traitor-youth in safety lodg'd?

CARACTACUS.

Druid, he fled——

CHORUS.

O fatal flight to Mona!

CARACTACUS.

But what of that? Arviragus is here,
My son is here, let then the traitor go,

By this he has join'd the Romans: let him join them,
A single arm, and that a villain's arm,
Can lend but little aid to any powers
Oppos'd to truth and virtue. Come, my son,
Let's to the troops, and marshal them with speed.
That done, we from these venerable men
Will claim their ready blessing: then to battle;
And the swift sun ev'n at his purple dawn
Shall spy us crown'd with conquest, or with death.

[*Exeunt Caractacus and Arviragus.*

CHORUS, EVELINA.

CHORUS.

What may his flight portend! Say, Evelina,
How came this youth to 'scape?

EVELINA.

And that to tell
Will fix much blame on my impatient folly:
For, ere your hallow'd lips had given permission,
I flew with eager haste to bear my father
News of his son's return. Inflam'd with that,
Think, how a sister's zealous breast must glow!
Your looks give mild assent. I glow'd indeed
With the dear tale, and sped me in his ear
To pour the precious tidings: but my tongue
Scarce nam'd Arviragus, ere the false stranger
(As I bethink me since) with stealthy pace
Fled to the cavern's mouth.

CHORUS.

The king pursued?

EVELINA.

Alas! he mark'd him not, for 'twas the moment,
When he had all to ask and all to fear,
Touching my brother's valour. Hitherto
His safety only, which but little mov'd him,
Had reach'd his ears: but when my tongue unfolded
The story of his bravery and his peril,
O how the tears cours'd plenteous down his cheeks!
How did he lift unto the heav'ns his hands
In speechless transport: yet he soon bethought him
Of Rome's invasion, and with fiery glance
Survey'd the cavern round; then snatch'd his spear,
And menac'd to pursue the flying traitor:
But I with prayers (O pardon, if they err'd)
Withheld his step, for to the left the youth
Had wing'd his way, where the thick underwood
Afforded sure retreat. Besides, if found,
Was age a match for youth?

CHORUS.

Maiden, enough,
Better perchance for us, if he was captive:
But in the justice of their cause, and heav'n,
Do Mona's sons confide.

BARD, CHORUS, ELIDURUS, EVELINA.

BARD.

Druid, the rites
Are finish'd, all save that which crowns the rest,
And which pertains to thy blest hand alone:
For that he kneels before thee.

CHORUS.

Take him hence,
We may not trust him forth to fight our cause.

ELIDURUS.

Now by Andraste's throne——

CHORUS.

Nay, swear not, youth,
The tie is broke, that held thy fealty:
Thy brother's fled.

ELIDURUS.

Fled!

CHORUS.

To the Romans fled:
Yes, thou hast cause to tremble.

ELIDURUS.

Ah, Vellinus!
Does thus our love, does thus our friendship end!
Was I thy brother, youth, and hast thou left me!
Yes; and how left me, cruel, as thou art,
The victim of thy crimes!

CHORUS.

True, thou must die.

ELIDURUS.

I pray ye then on your best mercy, fathers,
It may be speedy. I would fain be dead,
If this be life. Yet I must doubt ev'n that,
For falshood of this strange stupendous sort

Sets firm-ey'd reason on a gaze, mistrusting,
That what she sees in palpable plain form,
The stars in yon blue arch, these woods, these caverns,
Are all mere tricks of cozenage, nothing real,
The vision of a vision. If he's fled,
I ought to hate this brother.

CHORUS.

Yet thou dost not.

ELIDURUS.

But when astonishment will give me leave,
Perchance I shall.—And yet he is my brother,
And he was virtuous once. Yes, ye vile Romans,
Yes, I must die, before my thirsty sword
Drinks one rich drop of vengeance. Yet, ye robbers,
Yet will I curse you with my dying lips:
'Twas you, that stole away my brother's virtue.

CHORUS.

Now then prepare to die.

ELIDURUS.

I am prepar'd.
Yet, since I cannot now (what most I wish'd)
By manly prowess guard this lovely maid:
Permit, that on your holiest earth I kneel,
And pour one fervent prayer for her protection.
Allow me this, for tho' you think me false,
The gods will hear me.

EVELINA.

I can hold no longer!

O Druid, Druid, at thy feet I fall:
Yes, I must plead (away with virgin-blushes)
For such a youth must plead. I'll die to save him,
O take my life, and let him fight for Mona.

CHORUS.

Virgin, arise. His virtue hath redeem'd him,
And he shall fight for thee and for his country.
Youth, thank us with thy deeds. The time is short,
And now with reverence take our high lustration:
Thrice do we sprinkle thee with day-break dew
Shook from the May-thorn blossom; twice and thrice
Touch we thy forehead with our holy wand:
Now thou art fully purg'd. Now rise restor'd
To virtue and to us. Hence then, my son,
Hie thee to yonder altar, where our Bards
Shall arm thee duly both with helm and sword
For warlike enterprise. [*Exit Elidurus.*

CARACTACUS, CHORUS, ARVIRAGUS, EVELINA.

CARACTACUS.

'Tis true, my son,
Bold are their bearings, and I fear me not
But they have hearts will not belie their looks.
I like them well. Yet would to righteous heav'n
Those valiant veterans, that on Snowdon guard
Their scanty pittance of bleak liberty,
Were here to join them; we would teach these wolves,
Tho' we permit their rage to prowl our coasts,

That vengeance waits them ere they rob our altars.
Hail, Druid, hail! we find thy valiant guards
Accoutred so, as well bespeaks the wisdom
That fram'd their phalanx. We but wait thy blessing
To lead them 'gainst the foe.

CHORUS.

Caractacus!
Behold this sword: the sword of old Belinus,
Stain'd with the blood of giants, and its name
Trifingus. Many an age its charmed blade
Has slept within yon consecrated trunk.
Lo, I unsheath it, King; I wave it o'er thee;
Mark, what portentous streams of scarlet light
Flow from the brandish'd falchion. On thy knee
Receive the sacred pledge.—And mark our words.
By the bright circle of the golden sun,
By the brief courses of the errant moon,
By the dread potency of every star
That studs the mystic zodiac's burning girth,
By each, and all of these supernal signs,
We do adjure thee with this trusty blade,
To guard yon central oak, whose holiest stem
Involves the spirit of high Taranis:
This be thy charge; to which in aid we join
Ourselves, and our sage brethren. With our vassals
Thy son and the Brigantian prince shall make
Incursion on the foe.

CARACTACUS.

In this, and all,
Be ours observance meet. Yet surely, Druid,

The fresh and active vigour of these youths
Might better suit with this important charge.
Not that my heart shrinks at the glorious task,
But will with ready zeal pour forth its blood
Upon the sacred roots, my firmest courage
Might fail to save. Yet, fathers, I am old;
And if I fell the foremost in the onset,
Should leave a son behind, might still defend you.

CHORUS.

The sacred adjuration we have utter'd
May never be recall'd.

CARACTACUS.

Then be it so.
But do not think, I counsel this thro' fear:
Old as I am, I trust with half our powers
I could drive back these Romans to their ships;
Dastards, that come as doth the cow'ring fowler
To tangle me with snares and take me tamely;
Slaves, they shall find, that ere they gain their prey,
They have to hunt it boldly with barb'd spears,
And meet such conflict, as the chafed boar
Gives to his stout assailants. O ye gods!
That I might instant face them.

CHORUS.

Be thy son's
The onset.

ARVIRAGUS.

From his soul that son doth thank ye,
Blessing the wisdom, that preserves his father
Thus to the last. O if the fav'ring gods

Direct this arm, if their high will permit
I pour a prosperous vengeance on the foe,
I ask for life no longer, than to crown
The valiant task. Steel them, ye powers of heav'
Steel my firm soul with your own fortitude,
Free from alloy of passion. Give me courage
That knows not rage; revenge, that knows n
malice;
Let me not thirst for carnage, but for conque
And conquest gain'd, sleep vengeance in my brea
Ere in its sheath my sword.

CARACTACUS.

O hear his father!
If ever rashness spur'd me on, great Gods,
To acts of danger thirsting for renown;
If e'er my eager soul pursu'd its course
Beyond just reason's limit, visit not
My faults on him. I am the thing you made n
Vindictive, bold, precipitate, and fierce:
But as you gave to him a milder mind,
O bless him, bless him with a milder fate!

EVELINA.

Nor yet unheard let Evelina pour
Her pray'rs and tears. O hear a hapless maid
That ev'n thro' half the years her life has nu
ber'd,
Ev'n nine long years has drag'd a trembling bei
Beset with pains and perils. Give her peace;
And, to endear it more, be that blest peace
Won by her brother's sword. O bless his ar
And bless his valiant followers, one, and all.

ELIDURUS *entering armed.*

heav'n! and let this pure and virgin pray'r
ev'n for Elidurus, whose sad soul
ɔt look up to your immortal thrones,
ırge his own request: else would he ask,
all the dangers of th' approaching fight
t fall on him alone: that every spear
tomans wield might at his breast be aim'd;
arrow darted on his rattling helm;
so the brother of this beauteous maid,
ning safe with victory and peace,
t bear them to her bosom.

CHORUS.

Now rise all,
eav'n, that knows, what most ye ought to ask,
all ye ought to have. Behold, the stars
ıded; universal darkness reigns,
is the dreadful hour, now will our torches
with more livid horror, now our shrieks
:lanking arms will more appal the foe.
eed, ye Bards, that for the sign of onset
und the antientest of all your rhymes,
e birth tradition notes not, nor who fram'd
fty strains: the force of that high air
ulius feel, when, fir'd by it, our fathers
drove him recreant to his ships; and ill
ar'd his second landing, but that fate
'd the master Bard, who led the song.
forth, brave pair! Go, with our blessing go;
be the march, as ye ascend the hill:

Then, when ye hear the sound of our shrill trumpet,
Fall on the foe.

CARACTACUS.

Now glory be thy guide;
Pride of my soul, go forth and conquer.

EVELINA.

Brother,
Yet one embrace. O thou much honour'd stranger,
I charge thee fight by my dear brother's side,
And shield him from the foe; for he is brave,
And will with bold and well-directed arm
Return thy succour.

[*Exeunt Arviragus and Elidurus.*

CHORUS.

Now, ye priests, with speed
Strew on the altar's height your sacred leaves,
And light the morning flame. But why is this?
Why doth our brother Mador snatch his harp
From yonder bough? Why this way bend his step?

CARACTACUS.

He is entranc'd. The fillet bursts, that bound
His liberal locks; his snowy vestments fall
In ampler folds; and all his floating form
Doth seem to glisten with divinity!
Yet is he speechless. Say, thou chief of Bards,
What is there in this airy vacancy,
That thou with fiery and irregular glance
Shouldst scan thus wildly? wherefore heaves thy breast?
Why starts——

CHORUS.

ODE.

Hark! heard ye not yon footstep dread,
That shook the earth with thund'ring tread?
'Twas Death.—In haste
The warrior past;
High tower'd his helmed head:
I mark'd his mail, I mark'd his shield,
I 'spy'd the sparkling of his spear,
I saw his giant arm the falchion wield;
Wide wav'd the bick'ring blade, and fir'd the angry air.

On me (he cry'd) my Britons, wait,
To lead you to the field of fate
I come: yon car,
That cleaves the air,
Descends to throne my state:
I mount your champion and your God.
My proud steeds neigh beneath the thong:
Hark! to my wheels of brass, that rattle loud!
Hark! to my * clarion shrill, that brays the woods among!

Fear not now the fever's fire,
Fear not now the death-bed groan,
Pangs that torture, pains that tire,
Bed-rid age with feeble moan:

* Here one of the Druids blows the sacred trumpet.

These domestic terrors wait
Hourly at my palace gate;
And when o'er slothful realms my rod I wave,
These on the tyrant king and coward slave
Rush with vindictive rage, and drag them to their grave.
But ye, my sons, at this high hour
Shall share the fulness of my power:
From all your bows,
In level'd rows,
My own dread shafts shall shower.
Go then to conquest, gladly go,
Deal forth my dole of destiny,
With all my fury dash the trembling foe
Down to those darksome dens, where Rome's pale spectres lie.

Where creeps the ninefold stream profound
Her black inexorable round,
And on the bank,
To willows dank,
The shivering ghosts are bound.
Twelve thousand crescents all shall swell
To full-orb'd pride, and fading die,
Ere they again in life's gay mansions dwell:
Not such the meed that crowns the sons of Liberty.

No, my Britons! battle-slain,
Rapture gilds your parting hour:
I, that all despotic reign,
Claim but there a moment's power.

Swiftly the soul of British flame
Animates some kindred frame,
  Swiftly to life and light triumphant flies,
  Exults again in martial ecstasies,
Again for freedom fights, again for freedom dies.

CARACTACUS.

It does, it does! unconquer'd, undismay'd,
The British soul revives—Champion, lead on,
I follow—give me way. Some blessed shaft
Will rid me of this clog of cumb'rous age;
And I again shall in some happier mould
Rise to redeem my country.

CHORUS.

Stay thee, Prince,
And mark what clear and amber-skirted clouds
Rise from the altar's verge, and cleave the skies:
O 'tis a prosperous omen! Soon expect
To hear glad tidings.

CARACTACUS.

I will send them to thee.

CHORUS.

But see, a Bard approaches, and he bears them:
Else is his eye no herald to his heart.

BARD, CHORUS, CARACTACUS.

CARACTACUS.

Speedily tell thy tale.

BARD.

A tale like mine,

I trust your ears will willingly pursue
Thro' each glad circumstance. First, Monarch, learn,
The Roman troop is fled.

CHORUS.

Great Gods, we thank ye!

CARACTACUS.

Fought they not ere they fled? O tell me all.

BARD.

Silent, as night, that wrapt us in her veil,
We pac'd up yonder hill, whose woody ridge
O'erhung the ambush'd foe. No sound was heard,
Step felt, or sight descry'd: for safely hid,
Beneath the purple pall of sacrifice
Did sleep our holy fire, nor saw the air,
Till to that pass we came, where whilom Brute
Planted his five hoar altars. To our rites,
Then swift we hasted, and in one short moment
The rocky piles were cloth'd with livid flame.
Near each a white-rob'd Druid, whose stern voice
Thunder'd deep execrations on the foe.
Now wak'd our horrid symphony, now all
Our harps terrific rang: meanwhile the grove
Trembled, the altars shook, and thro' our ranks
Our sacred sisters rush'd in sable robes,
With air dishevel'd, and funeral brands
Hurl'd round with menacing fury. On they rush'd
In fierce and frantic mood, as is their wont
Amid the magic rites, they do to Night
In their deep dens below. Motions like these
Were never dar'd before in open air!

CHORUS.

Did I not say, we had a pow'r within us,
That might appal ev'n Romans?

BARD.

And it did.
They stood aghast, and to our vollied darts,
That thick as hail fell on their helms and corslets,
Scarce rais'd a warding shield. The sacred trumpet
Then rent the air, and instant at the signal
Rush'd down Arviragus with all our vassals;
A hot, but short-liv'd conflict then ensu'd:
For soon they fled. I saw the Romans fly,
Before I left the field.

CARACTACUS.

My son pursu'd!

BARD.

The Prince and Elidurus, like twin lions,
Did side by side engage. Death seem'd to guide
Their swords, no stroke fell fruitless, every wound
Gave him a victim.

CARACTACUS.

Thus my friend Ebrancus!
Ill-fated prince! didst thou and I in youth
Unite our valours. In his prime he fell,
On Conway's banks I saw him fall, and slew
His murderer.—But how far did they pursue?

BARD.

Ev'n to the ships: for I descry'd the rout,
Far as the twilight gleam would aid my sight.

CARACTACUS.

Now, thanks to the bright star that rul'd his birth;
Yes, he will soon return to claim my blessing,
And he shall have it pour'd in tears of joy
On his bold breast! methought I heard a step:
Is it not his?

BARD.

'Tis some of our own train,
And as I think, they lead six Romans captive.

CHORUS, CARACTACUS, CAPTIVES.

CHORUS.

My brethren, bear the prisoners to the cavern,
Till we demand them.

CARACTACUS.

Pause ye yet awhile.
They seem of bold demeanor, and have helms,
That speak them leaders. Hear me, Romans, hear.
That you are captives, is the chance of war:
Yet captives as ye are, in Britain's eye
Ye are not slaves. Barbarians, tho' ye call us,
We know the native rights, man claims from man,
And therefore never shall we gall your necks
With chains, or drag you at our scythed cars
In arrogance of triumph. Nor till taught
By Rome (what Britain sure should scorn to learn)
Her avarice, will we barter you for gold.
True, ye are captives, and our country's safety
Forbids, we give you back to liberty:
We give you therefore to the immortal Gods,

To them we lift you in the radiant cloud
Of sacrifice. They may in limbs of freedom
Replace your free-born souls, and their high mercy
Haply shall to some better world advance you;
Or else in this restore that golden gift,
Which lost, leaves life a burden. Does there breathe
A wretch so 'pall'd with the vain fear of death
Can call this cruelty? 'tis love, 'tis mercy,
And grant, ye Gods, if e'er I'm made a captive,
I meet the like fair treatment from the foe,
Whose stronger star quells mine. Now lead them on,
And, while they live, treat them, as men should men,
And not as Rome treats Britain. [*Exeunt Captives.*
Druid, these,
Ev'n should their chief escape, may to the Gods
In sacrifice——Whence was that shriek?

EVELINA, CARACTACUS, CHORUS.

EVELINA.

My father,
Support me, take me trembling to your arms;
All is not well. Ah me, my fears o'ercome me!

CARACTACUS.

What means my child?

EVELINA.

Alas! we are betray'd.
Ev'n now as wand'ring in yon eastern grove

I call'd the Gods to aid us, the dread sound
Of many hasty steps did meet mine ear:
This way they prest.

CARACTACUS.

Daughter, thy fears are vain.

EVELINA.

Methought I saw the flame of lighted brands,
And what did glitter to my dazzled sight,
Like swords and helms.

CARACTACUS.

All, all the feeble coinage
Of maiden fear.

EVELINA.

Nay, if mine ear mistook not,
I heard the traitor's voice, who that way 'scap'd,
Calling to arms.

CARACTACUS.

Away with idle terrors!
Know, thy brave brother's helm is crown'd with conquest,
Our foes are fled, their leaders are our captives.
Smile, my lov'd child, and imitate the sun,
That rises ruddy from behind yon oaks
To hail him victor.

CHORUS.

That the rising sun!
O horror! horror! sacrilegious fires
Devour our groves: they blaze, they blaze! O sound

The trump again; recall the prince, or all
Is lost.

CARACTACUS.

Druid, where is thy fortitude?
Do not I live? Is not this holy sword
Firm in my grasp? I will preserve your groves.
Britons, I go: Let those that dare die nobly,
Follow my step. [*Exit Caractacus.*

EVELINA.

O whither does he go?
Return, return: ye holy men, recal him.
What is his arm against a host of Romans?
O I have lost a father!

CHORUS.

Ruthless Gods!
Ye take away our souls: a general panic
Reigns thro' the grove. O fly, my brethren, fly,
To aid the king, fly to preserve your altars!
Alas! 'tis all in vain; our fate is fixt.
Look there, look there, thou miserable maid!
Behold thy bleeding brother.

ARVIRAGUS, ELIDURUS, EVELINA, CHORUS.

ARVIRAGUS.

Thanks, good youth!
Safe hast thou brought me to that holy spot,
Where I did wish to die. Support me still.
O, I am sick to death. Yet one step more:
Now lay me gently down. I would drag out

This life, tho' at some cost of throbs and pangs,
Just long enough to claim my father's blessing,
And sigh my last breath in my sister's arms.—
And here she kneels, poor maid! all dumb with grief.
Restrain thy sorrow, gentlest Evelina,
True, thou dost see me bleed: I bleed to death.

EVELINA.

Say'st thou to death! O Gods! the barbed shaft
Is buried in his breast. Yes, he must die;
And I, alas! am doom'd to see him die.
Where are your healing arts, medicinal herbs,
Ye holy men, your wonder-working spells?
Pluck me but out this shaft, stanch but this blood,
And I will call down blessings on your heads
With such a fervency—And can ye not!
Then let me beg you on my bended knee,
Give to my misery some opiate drug,
May shut up all my senses.—Yes, good fathers,
Mingle the potion so, that it may kill me
Just at the instant, this poor languisher
Heaves his last sigh.

ARVIRAGUS.

Talk not thus wildly, sister,
Think on our father's age——

EVELINA.

Alas! my brother!
We have no father now; or if we have,
He is a captive.

ARVIRAGUS.

Captive! O my wound!
It stings me now—But is it so? [*Turning to the Chorus.*

CHORUS.

Alas!
We know no more, save that he sallied single
To meet the foe, whose unexpected host
Round by the east had wound their fraudful march,
And fir'd our groves.

ELIDURUS.

O fatal, fatal valour!
Then is he seiz'd, or slain.

ARVIRAGUS.

Too sure he is!
Druid, not half the Romans met our swords;
We found the fraud too late: the rest are yonder.

CHORUS.

How could they gain the pass?

ARVIRAGUS.

The wretch, that fled
That way, return'd, conducting half their powers;
And—But thy pardon, youth, I will not wound thee,
He is thy brother.

ELIDURUS.

Thus my honest sword
Shall force the blood from the detested heart,
That holds alliance with him.

ARVIRAGUS.

Elidurus,
Hold, on our friendship hold. Thou noble youth,
Look on this innocent maid. She must to Rome,
Captive to Rome. Thou seest warm life flow
from me,
Ere long she'll have no brother. Heav'n's my
witness,
I do not wish that thou should'st live the slave
Of Rome: but yet she is my sister.

ELIDURUS.

Prince,
Thou urgest that, might make me drag an age
In fetters worse than Roman. I will live,
And while I live——

Enter BARD.

Fly to your caverns, Druids,
The grove's beset around. The chief approaches.

CHORUS.

Let him approach, we will confront his pride,
The Seer that rules amid the groves of Mona
Has not to fear his fury. What tho' age
Slackens our sinews; what tho' shield and sword
Give not their iron aid to guard our body;
Yet virtue arms our soul, and 'gainst that panoply
What 'vails the rage of robbers? Let him come.

ARVIRAGUS.

I faint apace.—Ye venerable men,
If ye can save this body from pollution,

If ye can tomb me in this sacred place,
I trust ye will. I fought to save these groves,
And, fruitless tho' I fought, some grateful oak,
I trust will spread its reverential gloom
O'er my pale ashes—Ah! that pang was death!
My sister, oh!—— [*Dies.*

ELIDURUS.

She faints! ah raise her!——

EVELINA.

Yes,
Now he is dead! I felt his spirit go
In a cold sigh, and as it past, methought
It paus'd awhile, and trembled on my lips!
Take me not from him: breathless as he is,
He is my brother still, and if the Gods
Do please to grace him with some happier being,
They ne'er can give to him a fonder sister.

CHORUS.

Brethren, surround the corse, and, ere the foe
Approaches, chaunt with meet solemnity
That grateful dirge your dying champion claims.

SEMICHORUS.

Lo, where incumbent o'er the shade
Rome's rav'ning eagle bows her beaked head!
Yet while a moment fate affords,
While yet a moment freedom stays,
That moment which outweighs
Eternity's unmeasur'd hoards,
Shall Mona's grateful Bards employ
To hymn their godlike hero to the sky.

SEMICHORUS.

Ring out, ye mortal strings;
Answer thou heav'nly harp, instinct with spirit all,
That o'er the jasper arch self-warbling swings
Of blest Andraste's throne:
Thy sacred sounds alone
Can celebrate the fall
Of bold Arviragus.

[*Enter Aulus Didius and Romans.*

AULUS DIDIUS, CHORUS, EVELINA, ELIDURUS.

AULUS DIDIUS.

Ye bloody priests,
Behold, we burst on your infernal rites,
And bid you pause. Instant restore our soldiers,
Nor hope that Superstition's ruthless step
Shall wade in Roman gore. Ye savage men,
Did not our laws give license to all faiths,
We would o'erturn your altars, headlong heave
These shapeless symbols of your barbarous gods,
And let the golden sun into your caves.

CHORUS.

Servant of Cæsar, has thine impious tongue
Spent the black venom of its blasphemy?
It has. Then take our curses on thine head,
Ev'n his fell curses, who doth reign in Mona,
Vicegerent of those gods thy pride insults.

AULUS DIDIUS.

Bold priest, I scorn thy curses, and thyself.

Soldiers, go search the caves, and free the prisoners.
Take heed, ye seize Caractacus alive.
Arrest yon youth; load him with heaviest irons,
He shall to Cæsar answer for his crime.

ELIDURUS.

I stand prepar'd to triumph in my crime.

AULUS DIDIUS.

'Tis well, proud boy—Look to the beauteous maid, [*To the Soldiers.*
That, tranc'd in grief, bends o'er yon bleeding corse—
Respect her sorrows.

EVELINA.

Hence, ye barbarous men,
Ye shall not take him welt'ring thus in blood,
To shew at Rome what British virtue was.
Avaunt! The breathless body that ye touch
Was once Arviragus!

AULUS DIDIUS.

Fear us not, Princess,
We reverence the dead.

CHORUS.

Would too to Heav'n,
Ye reverenc'd the Gods but ev'n enough
Not to debase with Slavery's cruel chain,
What they created free.

AULUS DIDIUS.

The Romans fight
Not to enslave, but humanize the world.

CHORUS.

Go to, we will not parley with thee, Roman:
Instant pronounce our doom.

AULUS DIDIUS.

Hear it, and thank us.
This once our clemency shall spare your grove,
If at our call ye yield the British king:
Yet learn, when next ye aid the foes of Cæsar,
That each old oak, whose solemn gloom ye boast,
Shall bow beneath our axes.

CHORUS.

Be they blasted,
Whene'er their shade forgets to shelter virtue.

Enter BARD.

Mourn, Mona, mourn. Caractacus is captive!
And dost thou smile, false Roman? do not think
He fell an easy prey. Know, ere he yielded,
Thy bravest veterans bled. He too, thy spy,
The base Brigantian prince, hath seal'd his fraud
With death. Bursting thro' armed ranks, that hemm'd
The caitiff round, the brave Caractacus
Seiz'd his false throat; and, as he gave him death,
Indignant thunder'd, 'Thus is my last stroke
'The stroke of justice.' Numbers then opprest him:
I saw the slave, that cowardly behind
Pinion'd his arms; I saw the sacred sword
Writh'd from his grasp: I saw, what now ye see,
Inglorious sight! those barbarous bonds upon him.

CARACTACUS, AULUS DIDIUS, CHORUS, &c.

CARACTACUS.

Romans, methinks the malice of your tyrant
Might furnish heavier chains. Old as I am,
And wither'd as you see these war-worn limbs,
Trust me, they shall support the weightiest load
Injustice dares impose.——
Proud-crested soldier! [*To Didius.*
Who seem'st the master-mover in this business,
Say, dost thou read less terror on my brow,
Than when thou met'st me in the fields of war
Heading my nations? No, my free-born soul
Has scorn still left to sparkle thro' these eyes,
And frown defiance on thee.—Is it thus!
[*Seeing his son's body.*
Then I'm indeed a captive. Mighty Gods!
My soul, my soul submits: patient it bears
The pond'rous load of grief ye heap upon it.
Yes, it will grovel in this shatter'd breast,
And be the sad tame thing it ought to be,
Coopt in a servile body.

AULUS DIDIUS.

Droop not, King.
When Claudius, the great master of the world,
Shall hear the noble story of thy valour,
His pity——

CARACTACUS.

Can a Roman pity, soldier?
And if he can, Gods! must a Briton bear it?

Arviragus! my bold, my breathless boy,
Thou hast escap'd such pity; thou art free.
Here in high Mona shall thy noble limbs
Rest in a noble grave; posterity
Shall to thy tomb with annual reverence bring
Sepulchral stones, and pile them to the clouds:
Whilst mine——

AULUS DIDIUS.

The morn doth hasten our departure.
Prepare thee, King, to go: a fav'ring gale
Now swells our sails.

CARACTACUS.

Inhuman, that thou art!
Dost thou deny a moment for a father
To shed a few warm tears o'er his dead son?
I tell thee, chief, this act might claim a life,
To do it duly; even a longer life,
Than sorrow ever suffer'd. Cruel man!
And thou deniest me moments. Be it so.
I know you Romans weep not for your children
Ye triumph o'er your tears, and think it valour:
I triumph in my tears. Yes, best-lov'd boy,
Yes, I can weep, can fall upon thy corse,
And I can tear my hairs, these few grey hairs,
The only honours war and age have left me.
Ah, son! thou might'st have rul'd o'er many nations,
As did thy royal ancestry: but I,
Rash that I was, ne'er knew the golden curb
Discrétion hangs on brav'ry: else perchance
These men, that fasten fetters on thy father,

Had su'd to him for peace, and claim'd his friendship.

AULUS DIDIUS.

But thou wast still implacable to Rome,
And scorn'd her friendship.

CARACTACUS, *starting up from the body.*

Soldier, I had arms,
Had neighing steeds to whirl my iron cars,
Had wealth, dominion. Dost thou wonder, Roman,
I fought to save them? What if Cæsar aims
To lord it universal o'er the world,
Shall the world tamely crouch at Cæsar's footstool?

AULUS DIDIUS.

Read in thy fate our answer. Yet if sooner
Thy pride had yielded——

CARACTACUS.

Thank thy Gods, I did not.
Had it been so, the glory of thy master,
Like my misfortunes, had been short and trivial,
Oblivion's ready prey: now after struggling
Nine years, and that right bravely 'gainst a tyrant,
I am his slave to treat as seems him good;
If cruelly, 'twill be an easy task
To bow a wretch, alas! how bow'd already!
Down to the dust: if well, his clemency,
When trick'd and varnish'd by your glossing penmen,
Will shine in honour's annals, and adorn

Himself; it boots not me. Look there, look there,
The slave that shot that dart, kill'd ev'ry hope
Of lost Caractacus! Arise, my daughter.
Alas! poor Prince; art thou too in vile fetters?
[*To Elidurus.*
Come hither, youth: be thou to me a son,
To her a brother. Thus with trembling arms
I lead you forth; children, we go to Rome.
Weep'st thou, my girl? I prithee hoard thy tears
For the sad meeting of thy captive mother:
For we have much to tell her, much to say
Of these good men, who nurtur'd us in Mona;
Much of the fraud and malice, that pursu'd us;
Much of her son, who pour'd his precious blood
To save his sire and sister: think'st thou, maid,
Her gentleness can hear the tale, and live?
And yet she must. O Gods, I grow a talker!
Grief and old age are ever full of words:
But I'll be mute. Adieu! ye holy men;
Yet one look more—Now lead us hence for ever.

LETTERS.

LETTER I.

I was aware, when I sent you my* poem, that it would be liable to the very objections you make to it. Yet perhaps they will be obviated to your satisfaction, when I have laid before you (as indeed I ought to have done at first) the original idea which led me to chuse such a subject, and to excuse it in so peculiar a manner.

Had I intended to give an exact copy of the antient drama, your objections to the present poem would be unanswerable. But my design was much less confined. I meant only to pursue the antient method, so far as it is probable a Greek poet, were he alive, would now do, in order to adapt himself to the genius of our times, and the character of our tragedy. According to this notion, every thing was to be allowed to the present taste, which nature and Aristotle could possibly dispense with; and nothing of intrigue or refinement was to be admitted, at

* Elfrida, to which these letters were prefixt in the former editions of that poem.

which antient judgment could reasonably take offence. Good sense, as well as antiquity, prescribed an adherence to the three great unities; these, therefore, were strictly observed. But on the other hand, to follow the modern masters in those respects wherein they had not so faultily deviated from their predecessors, a story was chosen, in which the tender rather than the noble passions were predominant, and in which even love had the principal share. Characters too were drawn as nearly approaching to private ones, as tragic dignity would permit; and affections raised rather from the impulse of common humanity, than the distresses of royalty and the fate of kingdoms. Besides this, for the sake of natural embellishment, and to reconcile mere modern readers to that simplicity of fable, in which I thought it necessary to copy the antients, I contrived to lay the scene in an old romantic forest. For, by this means, I was enabled to enliven the poem by various touches of pastoral description; not affectedly brought in from the store-house of a picturesque imagination, but necessarily resulting from the scenery of the place itself: a beauty so extremely striking in the COMUS of Milton, and the AS YOU LIKE IT of Shakspeare; and of which the Greek Muse (though fond of rural imagery) has afforded few examples, besides that admirable one in the PHILOCTETES of Sophocles.

By this idea I could wish you to regulate your criticism. I need not, I think, observe to you

that these deviations from the practice of the antients may be reasonably defended. For we were long since agreed, that where love does not degenerate into episodical gallantry, but makes the foundation of the distress, it is, from the universality of its influence, a passion very proper for tragedy. And I have seen you too much moved at the representation of some of our best tragedies of private story, to believe you will condemn me for making the other deviation.

LETTER II.

I AM glad you approve the method I have taken of softening the rigor of the old drama. If I have, indeed, softened it sufficiently for the modern taste, without parting with any of the essentials of the Greek method, I have obtained my purpose: which was to obviate some of the popular objections made to the antient form of tragedy. For the current opinion, you know, is, that by the strict adherence to the unities, it restrains the genius of the poet; by the simplicity of its conduct, it diminishes the pathos of the fable; and, by the admission of a continued chorus, prevents that agreeable embarrass, which awakens our attention, and interests our passions.

The universal veneration which we pay to the name of Shakspeare, at the same time that it has improved our relish for the higher beauties

of poetry, has undoubtedly been the ground-work of all this false criticism. That disregard, which, in compliance merely with the taste of the times, he shewed of all the necessary rules of the drama, hath since been considered as a characteristic of his vast and original genius; and consequently set up as a model for succeeding writers. Hence M. Voltaire remarks very justly, "*Que le merite de cet auteur a perdu le theatre Anglois. Le tems, qui seul fait la reputation des hommes, rend a la fin leurs defauts respectables.*"

Yet, notwithstanding the absurdity of this low superstition, the notion is so popular amongst Englishmen, that I fear it will never be entirely discredited, till a poet rises up amongst us, with a genius as elevated and daring as Shakspeare's, and a judgment as sober and chastised as Racine's. But as it seems too long to wait for this prodigy, it will not surely be improper for any one of common talents, who would entertain the public without indulging its caprice, to take the best models of antiquity for his guides; and to adapt those models, as near as may be, to the manners and taste of his own times. Unless he do both, he will, in effect, do nothing. For it cannot be doubted, that the many gross faults of our stage are owing to the complaisance and servility with which the ordinary run of writers have ever humoured that illiterate, whimsical, or corrupted age, in which it was their misfortune to be born.

Milton, you will tell me, is a noble exception o this observation. He is so, and would have been a nobler, had he not run into the contrary extreme. The contempt in which, perhaps with justice, he held the age he lived in, prevented him from condescending either to amuse or instruct it. He had, before, given to his unworthy countrymen the noblest poem that genius, conducted by antient art, could produce; and he had seen them receive it with disregard, if not with dislike. Conscious therefore of his own dignity, and of their demerit, he looked to posterity only for his reward, and to posterity only directed his future labours. Hence it was, perhaps, that he formed his SAMPSON AGONISTES on a model more simple and severe than Athens herself would have demanded; and took Æschylus for his master rather than Sophocles or Euripides: intending by this conduct to put as great a distance as possible between himself and his contemporary writers; and to make his work (as he himself said) *much different from what amongst them passed for the best.* The success of the poem was, accordingly, what one would have expected. The age it appeared in, treated it with total neglect; neither hath that posterity, to which he appealed, and which has done justice to most of his other writings, as yet given to this excellent piece its full measure of popular and universal fame. Perhaps, in your closet, and that of a few more, who unaffectedly admire genuine nature and antient simplicity, the Agonistes may hold a distinguished rank. Yet,

surely, we cannot say (in Hamlet's phrase) "*that it pleases the million; it is still caviar to the general.*"

Hence, I think, I may conclude, that unless one would be content with a very late and very learned posterity, Milton's conduct in this point should not be followed. A writer of tragedy must certainly adapt himself more to the general taste; because the dramatic, of all kinds of poetry, ought to be most universally relished and understood. The lyric muse addresses herself to the imagination of a reader; the didactic to his judgment; but the tragic strikes directly on his passions. Few men have a strength of imagination capable of pursuing the flights of Pindar; many have not a clearness of apprehension suited to the reasonings of Lucretius and Pope: but every man has passions to be excited; and every man feels them excited by Shakspeare.

But, though tragedy be thus chiefly directed to the heart, it must be observed, that it will seldom attain its end without the concurrent approbation of the judgment. And to procure this, the artificial construction of the fable goes a great way. In France, the excellence of their several poets is chiefly measured by this standard. And amongst our own writers, if you except Shakspeare (who indeed ought, for his other virtues, to be exempt from common rules) you will find, that the most regular of their compositions is generally reckoned their *chef d'œuvre*, witness the *All for Love* of Dryden, the *Venice preserved* of Otway, and the *Jane Shore* of Rowe.

LETTER III.

THE scheme you proposed in your last, is, I own, practicable enough. Undoubtedly, most part of the dialogue of the Chorus might be put into the mouth of an Emma or Matilda, who, with some little shew of sisterly concernment, might be easily made to claim kindred with Earl Athelwold. Nay, by the addition of a few unnecessary incidents, which would cost me no more than they are worth in contriving, and an unmeaning personage or two, who would be as little expence in creating, I believe I could quickly make the whole tolerably fit for an English audience.

But for all this I cannot persuade myself to enter upon the task. I have, I know not how (like many of my betters) contracted a kind of veneration for the old Chorus; and am willing to think it essential to the tragic drama. You shall hear the reasons that incline me to this judgment. They respect the *poet* and the *audience*.

It is agreed, I think, on all hands, that in the conduct of a fable, the admission of a Chorus lays a necessary restraint on the *poet*. The two unities of time and place, are esteemed by some of less consequence in our modern tragedy, than the third unity of action; but admit a Chorus, and you must, of necessity, restore them to those equal rights, which they antiently enjoyed, and

be supposed that these spectators should
pany the chief personages into private
ments, one single scene, or *unity of pla*
comes strictly necessary: and as these sp
are assembled on purpose to observe and
part in the action, the *time* of that acti
comes, of course, that of the spectacle o
sentation itself; it being unreasonable t
the spectators attend so long, as the p
bringing about his catastrophe, may
And this is usually the practice of the
stage. The modern, on the contrary,
very little these two capital restraints;
disuse of the Chorus helps greatly to conc
absurdity: for the poet, without offenc
much against the laws of probability, m
his personages from one part to another
same palace or city, when they have only
try servant or insignificant confidant to
them. He may think himself at liberty t
two or three days, months, or even ye

persuade his audience, that as much time has elapsed as his hero's, or rather his own distress, may demand.

Hence it is, that secret intrigues become (as Mr. Dryden gravely calls them) the *beauties of our modern stage*. Hence it is, that incidents, and bustle, and *business*, supply the place of simplicity, nature, and pathos: a happy change, perhaps, for the generality of writers, who might otherwise find it impossible to fill *cette longue carriere de cinq actes*, which a writer, sufficiently experienced in these matter, says, *est si prodigieusement difficile a remplir sans episodes*.

But, whatever these play-makers may have gained by rejecting the Chorus, the true poet has lost considerably by it. For he has lost a graceful and natural resource to the embellishments of picturesque description, sublime allegory, and whatever else comes under the denomination of *pure poetry*. Shakspeare, indeed, had the power of introducing this naturally, and, what is most strange, of joining it with *pure passion*. But I make no doubt, if we had a tragedy of his formed on the Greek model, we should find in it more frequent, if not nobler instances of his high poetical capacity, than in any single composition he has left us. I think you have a proof of this in those parts of his historical plays, which are called Choruses, and written in the common dialogue metre. And your imagination will easily conceive, how fine an ode, the description of the night preceding the battle

moral reflections with grace and sobriety. this comes more properly under conside when I give you my thoughts on the adv the audience received from a well-con Chorus.

LETTER IV.

In my last I took no notice of that superio and majesty, which the Chorus necessarily to the scene of the drama. I made no r on the agreeable variety it introduced in versification and metre; nor shewed ho uniting the harmony of the lyre to the p the buskin, music became intimately con with it, and furnished it with all its add graces. These and many other advant might have insisted upon, had I though so material as the two I mentioned; the l which, namely, its being a proper vehi moral and sentiment, is so material, that I

tender ones, to think coolly, and impress on the spectators a moral sentiment properly. A confidant or servant has seldom sense enough to do it, never dignity enough to make it regarded. Instead therefore of these, the antients were provided with a band of distinguished persons, not merely capable of seeing and hearing, but of arguing, advising, and reflecting; from the leader of which a moral sentiment never came unnaturally, but suitably and gracefully; and from the troop itself, a poetical flow of tender commiseration, of religious supplication, or of virtuous triumph, was ever ready to heighten the pathos, to inspire a reverential awe of the Deity, and to advance the cause of *honesty* and of truth.

If you ask me, how it augmented the pathetic, I cannot give you a better answer than the *Abbe Vatry* has done in his dissertation on the subject, published in the *Memoirs de l'Acad. des Inscr. &c.* "It effected this (says he) both in its *odes* and *dialogue*. The wonderful power of music and the dance is universally allowed. And, as these were always *accompaniments* to the odes, there is no doubt but they contributed greatly to move the passions. It was necessary that there should be odes or intermedes, but it was also necessary that these intermedes should not suffer the minds of the audience to cool, but, on the contrary, should support and fortify those passions which the previous scenes had already excited. Nothing imaginable could produce this effect better, than the choral songs and dances,

which filled the mind with ideas corresponding to the subject, and never failed to add new force to the sentiments of the principal personages. In the dialogue also, the Chorus served to move the passions, by shewing to the spectators other spectators strongly affected by the action. A spectacle of such a kind as is fitted to excite in us the passions of *terror* and *pity*, will not of itself so strongly affect us, as when we see others, also, affected by it. The painters have generally understood this secret, and have had recourse to an expedient, similar to that of the Chorus of the poets. Not content with the simple representation of an historical event, they have also added groups of assistant figures, and exprest in their faces the different passions, they would have their picture excite. Nay they sometimes inlist into their service evēn irrational animals. In the *Slaughter of the Innocents*, le Brun was not satisfied with expressing all the horror, of which the subject is naturally capable, he has also painted two horses with their hair standing on end, and starting back, as afraid to trample upon the bleeding infants. This is an artifice which has often been employed, and which has always succeeded. A good poet should do the same; and Iphigenia should not be suffered to appear on the theatre, without being accompanied with persons capable of feeling her misfortunes."

Had this ingenious Abbé seen the famous Belisarius of Vandyke, I am apt to believe he would

have thought it a much more noble illustration of the matter. The soldier in that piece, though so much condemned by our modern professors of *virtù* for being, as they say, the principal figure, is the very thing which raises this picture from a simple portrait (which it must otherwise have been) to the finest moral painting; and in Greece would have placed the painter amongst that class of artists, which they esteemed the noblest, the ΗΘΟΓΡΑΦΟΙ. The greatest tragic poet could not have raised a more exquisite distress than this judicious painter has done by the attitude of that soldier; as well as by the subordinate figures, which, with great propriety, are female ones; nothing being so likely to raise in a military mind that mixture of pity and disdain, which he wanted to express, as to see such a hero relieved by charity, and that too the charity of girls and old women.

But, returning to my subject, I will just observe to you, that if it be proper to assist an audience in relishing the pathetic, by shewing an imitation of that pathos in the Chorus, it is much more so to instruct them how to be affected properly, with the characters and actions which are represented in the course of the drama. The character of PIERRE in *Venice Preserved*, when left entirely to the judgment of the audience, is perhaps one of the most improper for public view, that ever was produced on any stage. It is almost impossible, but some part of the spectators should go from the representation

with very false and immoral impressions. But had the tragedy been written on the antient plan; had Pierre's character been drawn just as it is, and some few alterations made in Jaffier's, I know no two characters more capable of doing service in a moral view, when justly animadverted upon by the Chorus. I don't say, I would have trusted Otway with the writing of it.

To have done, and to release you. Bad characters become on this plan as harmless in the hands of the poet, as the historian; and good ones become infinitely more useful, by how much the poetic is more forcible than the historical mode of instruction.

LETTER V.

The reason, why in a former letter you advised me to alter the Chorus, is made very apparent in your last. For, by persuading me to get the odes set to music, and to risk the play on the stage, I understand only that you are willing, any how, to make it a more profitable work for me, than it can possibly be by means of the press alone.

Yet certainly, Sir, one single reflection on our British pit will make you change your sentiments effectually. Think only on the trial made by M. Racine, in a nation much before ours, in a taste for probability and decorum in theatrical diversions. In his two last tragedies, you know,

he has fully succeeded in the very thing I aimed at; and has adapted a noble imitation of antient simplicity to the taste of his own times: particularly in his *Athalia*, a poem in which the most superb and august spectacle, the most interesting event, and the most sublime flow of inspired poetry, are all nobly and naturally united. Yet I am told, that neither that, nor the *Esther*, retains its Chorus, when represented on the French theatre.

To what is this owing? To the refinement most certainly of our modern music. This art is now carried to such a pitch of perfection, or if you will of corruption, which makes it utterly incapable of being an adjunct to poetry. *Il y a grand apparence, que les progrès que voux avez faits dans la musique, ont nui enfin à ceux de la veritable tragedie. C'est un talent, qui a fait tort a un autre*; says M. Voltaire with his usual taste and judgment. Our different cadences, our divisions, variations, repetitions, without which modern music cannot subsist, are entirely improper for the expression of poetry, and were scarce known to the antients.

But could this be managed, the additional expence necessarily attendant on such a performance, would make the matter impracticable. This Mr. Dryden foresaw long ago. The passage is curious.

"A new theatre, much more ample and much deeper, must be made for that purpose; besides the cost of sometimes forty or fifty habits: which

is an expence too large to be supplied by a company of actors. It is true, I should not be sorry to see a *Chorus* on a theatre, more than as large and as deep again as ours, built and adorned at a king's charges; and on that condition, and another, which is, that my hands were not bound behind me, as now they are, I should not despair of making such *a tragedy* as might be both *instructive* and *delightful* according to the *manner* of the Grecians." What he means by having *his hands bound*, I imagine, is, that he was either engaged to his subscribers for a translation of Virgil, or to the manager of the theatre for so many plays a season. This suffrage of Mr. Dryden is, however, very apposite to the present point. It serves, also, to vindicate my design of imitating the Greek drama. For if he, who was so prejudiced to the modern stage, as to think intrigue a capital beauty in it; if he, I say, owns that the grand secret *prodesse et delectare* was the characteristic of the Greek drama only, nothing can better justify my present attempt than the approbation he gives to it in this passage.

Having now settled with you all matters of general criticism, I hope in your next you will give me your objections to *scenes, speeches, images*, &c. And be assured I shall treat your judgment in these matters with greater deference, than I have done in what related to the stage and the Chorus.

Pembroke Hall, 1751.

* ILLUSTRATIONS.

Page 125, *ver.* 2.

On the left,
Reside the † sages skill'd in nature's lore:

† *i. e.* The Euvates; one of the three classes of the Druids, according to Am. Marcellinus. Studia liberalium doctrinarum inchoata per Bardos, Euvates, & Druidas. This class, Strabo tells us, had the care of the sacrifices, and studied natural philosophy; which here, by *the changeful universe*, is shewn to be on Pythagorean principles. Whenever the *priests* are mentioned in the subsequent parts of the drama, this order of men is intended to be meant, as distinguished from the Druids and Bards.

Page 130, *ver.* 2.

Thou shalt live;
Yet shalt thou live an interdicted wretch,
All rights of nature cancell'd.

Alluding to the druidical power of excommunication, mentioned by Cæsar. Si quis aut privatus, aut publicus,

* The above quotations, from antient authors, are here thrown together, in order to support and explain some passages in the drama of CARACTACUS, that respect the manners of the Druids; and which, the general account of their customs, to be found in our histories of Britain, does not include

eorum decreto non stetit, sacrificiis interdicunt. Hæc pœna apud eos est gravissima. Quibus ita est interdictum, ii numero impiorum ac sceleratorum habentur—neque iis petentibus jus redditur, neque honos ullus communicatur. C. Comment. lib. vi.

Page 132, *ver.* 19.

Are the milk-white steers prepared?

In the minute description which Pliny gives us of the ceremony of gathering the misletoe, he tells us, they sacrificed two white bulls. See Pliny's Natural History, l. xvi. c. 44. which Drayton, in his Polyolbion, thus versifies.

Sometimes within my shades, in many an antient wood,
Whose often-twined tops great Phœbus' fires withstood,
The fearless British priest, under an aged oak,
Taking a milk-white bull, unstrained with the yoke,
And with an axe of gold, from that Jove-sacred tree
The misletoe cut down; then with a bended knee
On th' unhew'd altar laid, put to the hallow'd fires;
And whilst in the sharp flame the trembling flesh expires,
As their strong fury mov'd (when all the rest adore)
Pronouncing their desires the sacrifice before,
Up to th' eternal heav'n their bloodied hands did rear:
And whilst the murm'ring woods ev'n shudder'd as with fear,
Preach'd to the beardless youth the soul's immortal state;
To other bodies still how it should transmigrate,
That to contempt of death them strongly did excite.

NINTH SONG.

Page 133, *ver.* 14.

Where our matron sister dwells.

The existence of female Druids seems ascertained by Tacitus, in his description of the final destruction of Mona,

by Paulinus Suetonius. Stabat pro litore diversa acies densa armis virisque, *intercursantibus fœminis*, &c. Also by the known story of Dioclesian, on which Fletcher formed a play, called the Prophetess.

Page 133, *ver.* 17.

And the potent adder-stone.

The ovum anguinum, or serpent's egg; a famous druidical amulet, thus circumstantially described by Pliny. ——Præterea est ovorum genus in magna Galliarum fama, omissum Græcis. Angues innumeri æstate convoluti, salivis faucium corporumque spumis artifici complexu glomerantur; anguinum appellatur. Druidæ sibilis id dicunt in sublime jactari, sagoque oportere intercipi, ne tellurem attingat. Profugere raptorem equo, serpentes enim insequi, donec arceantur, amnis alicujus interventu, &c. Nat. Hist. l. xxix. c. 3.

There are remains of this superstition still, both in the northern and western parts of our island. For Lhwyd, the author of the Archeologia, writes thus to Rowland; see Mona Antiqua, p. 338. "The Druid doctrine about the *Glain Neidr*, obtains very much through all Scotland, as well lowlands as highlands; but there is not a word of it in this kingdom (Ireland); where, as there are no snakes, they could not propagate it. Besides snake-stones, the highlanders have their snail-stones, paddock-stones, &c. to all which they attribute their several virtues, and wear them as amulets." And in another letter he writes, "The Cornish retain variety of charms, and have still, towards the land's end, the amulet of Maen Magal, and Glain Neidr, which latter they call a Milpreu, or Melpreu, and have a charm for the snake to make it, when they have found one asleep, and struck a hazel wand in the centre of her spires."

Page 148, *ver.* 7.

Have the milk-white steeds
Unrein'd, and, neighing, pranc'd with fav'ring steps.

The few and imperfect accounts antiquity gives us of ceremonies, &c. which are unquestionably druidical, makes it necessary in this, and in other places of the drama, to have recourse to Tacitus's account of the Germans, amongst whom, if there were really no established Druids, there was certainly a great correspondency, in religious opinions, with the Gauls and Britons. The passage here alluded to, is taken from his 10th chapter. Proprium gentis, equorumque quoque præsagia ac monitus experiri. Publice aluntur iisdem nemoribus ac lucis, candidi & nullo mortali opere contacti, quos pressos sacro curru, sacerdos ac rex, vel princeps civitatis comitantur, hinnitus & fremitus observant, nec ulli auspicio major fides non solum apud plebem, sed apud proceres, apud sacerdotes.

Page 149, *ver.* 4.

Thou art a king, a sov'reign o'er frail man;
I am a Druid, servant of the gods.
Such service is above such sov'reignty.

The supreme authority of the Druids over their kings, is thus ascertained by Dion. Chrysostom.——Κελται δε ους σομαζουσι Δρυιδας, και τουτους περι Μανλικην σιλας, και την αλλην σοφιαν, ὡν αιτευ, τοις βασιλευσιν ουδεν εξεστι πρατλειν, ουδε βουλευεσθαι, ὡστε το μεν αληθες εκεινους αρχειν, τους δε βασιλεας, αυτων ὑπηρετας και διακονους γεγνεσθαι της γνωμης, εν θρονοις χρυσοις καθημενους, και οικιας μεγαλας οικουντας, και πολυτελως ευωχουμενους. Helmodus also de Slavis, L. ii. c. 12. asserts,

Rex apud eos modicæ est æstimationis in comparatione flaminis.

Page 150, *ver.* 2.

The time will come, when destiny and death
Thron'd in a burning car.

Strabo, and other writers, tell us, the Druids taught, that the world was finally to be destroyed by fire; upon which this allegory is founded.

Page 157, *ver.* 5.

The gods, my brethren,
Have wak'd these doubts in the untainted breast
Of this mild maiden.

Inesse enim sanctum quid & providum fœminis putant. Nec aut consilia ipsorum aspernantur, aut responsa negant. Tac. de Morib. Germ. And Strabo to the like purpose, l. vii. Απανλες γαρ της δεισιδαιμονιαι αρχηγες οισνλαι τας γυναικας.

Page 161, *ver.* 21.

Behold yon huge
And unhewn sphere of living adamant.

This is meant to describe the rocking-stone, of which there are several still to be seen in Wales, Cornwall, and Derbyshire. They are universally supposed, by antiquarians, to be Druid monuments; and Mr. Toland thinks, "that the Druids made the people believe that they only could move them, and that by a miracle, by which they condemned or acquitted the accused, and often brought criminals to confess what could in no other way be extorted from them." It was this conjecture which gave the hint for this piece of machinery. The reader may find a description of one of these rocking-stones in Camden's Bri-

tannia, in his account of Pembrokeshire; and also several in Borlase's history of Cornwall.

Page 188, *ver.* 7.

——————And its name
Trifingus.

The name of the enchanted sword in the Hervarer Saga.

Page 188, *ver.* 14.

By the bright circle of the golden sun.

This adjuration is taken from the literal form of the old druidical oath, which they administered to their disciples; and which the learned Selden, in Prolog. de Diis Syr. gives us from Vettius Valens Antiochenus, l. vii. It is as follows: Τυς ταις παρεγγελιαις ἡμων πειθομενυς ὀρκιζω ΗΛΙΟΝ μιν ἱερον κυκλον και ΣΕΛΗΝΗΣ απαμαλης δρομυς, των τε λοιπων ΑΣΤΕΡΩΝ δυναμεις και κυκλον ΔΩΔΕΚΑΘΕΟ ΖΩΔΙΩΝ, τ' απακριφος ταυτα εχειν, και τοις απαιδευτοις η αμυητοις μη μεταδιδοναι, τιμην τε και μνημην των εισηγησαμενω απονεμειν, &c.

Page 196, *ver.* 15.

Near each a white-rob'd Druid, whose stern voice
Thunder'd deep execrations on the foe.

This account is taken from what history tells us did really happen some years after, when the groves of Mona were destroyed by Suetonius Paulinus. Igitur Monam insulam incolis validam, & receptaculum perfugarum aggredi parat, navesque fabricatur plano alveo, adversus breve litus & incertum. Sic pedes; equites vado secuti, aut altiores inter undas, adnantes equis transmisere. Stabat pro litore diversa acies densa armis virisque, intercursantibus fœminis: in modum furiarum, veste ferali crinibus dejectis

faces præferebant. Druidæ circum, preces diras sublatis ad cœlum manibus fundentes, novitate aspectus perculere milites ut quasi hærentibus membris, immobile corpus vulneribus præberent. Dein cohortationibus ducis, & se ipsi stimulantes ne muliebre & fanaticum agmen pavescerent, inferunt signa, sternuntque obvios & igni suo involvunt. Tac. Ann. l. xiv. c. 29.

Page 206. *ver.* 14.

These shapeless symbols of your barbarous gods.

The Druids did not really worship the divinity under any symbol. But this is put intentionally into the mouth of the Roman, as mistaking the rude stones placed round the grove for idols. Thus Lucan, in his beautiful description of a Druid grove,

——— simulacraque mœsta deorum
Arte carent cæsisque extant informia truncis.
Phar. lib. iii.

Some imagery from the same description is also borrowed in the opening of the drama.

Page 211. *ver.* 3.

———Soldier, I had arms.

This passage, and some others in this scene, are taken from Caractacus's famous speech in Tacitus, before the throne of Claudius; but here adapted to his dramatic character.

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